AUGUST
1922

EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

NUMBER
276

First in Fiction

Everybody's

MAG ZINE

st, 1922

5¢

BEGINNING
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Ten Other All-Fiction Features

NEW MYSTERY SERIAL "THE SOUL-SCAR"

4½% on Savings

New U. S. Treasury Savings Certificates

offer an unusual opportunity to save systematically

THE United States Government, through the Treasury and Post Office Departments, has announced a sure way to help men and women everywhere who want to save money and make it earn more.

Treasury Savings Certificates, New Issue, are now added to the previous offerings of Government securities for investment of savings. These new Treasury Savings Certificates will earn 4½ per cent a year, compounded semi-annually, if held to maturity.

The Certificates may be redeemed before maturity at redemption prices which increase from month to month, as stated on the backs of the Certificates, yielding about 3½ per cent interest, compounded semi-annually.

Issued in denominations within the reach of all, at present prices, you can buy a $25 Certificate for $20, a $100 Certificate for $80, or a $1000 Certificate for $800. Each matures in five years from date of issue, earning 25 per cent for the full period of investment.

The New Way to Save

This is a new and simpler way to save methodically, devised primarily for weekly or monthly savings. If you can save $20 per week or per month, these Certificates have an unusual earning capacity.

If you save less than $20 per month, you can accumulate Postal Savings Stamps at 10 cents each, or Treasury Savings Stamps at $1 each, both non-interest-bearing. Or you can open an interest-bearing Postal Savings account. Then you can convert your savings into a Treasury Savings Certificate when you accumulate $20.

Thus the Government offers the people an ideal system of saving—absolute safety, liberal interest, ready cash if withdrawn.

Everybody can and should take advantage of this opportunity and learn how easy it is for savings to accumulate.

Become thoroughly posted on this unusual opportunity. Begin saving by this simpler, more profitable method, and let your dollars work for you. Thousands are adopting this new method.

Liberal Interest

Treasury Savings Certificates offer a liberal interest. Each dollar saved earns 25 per cent in 5 years, which is at the rate of 4½ per cent a year, compounded semi-annually. If withdrawn before maturity you receive interest at the rate of 3½ per cent, compounded semi-annually.

Safety

These Certificates are a direct obligation of your Government, the soundest investment conceivable, backed by the strength of the Nation. Your principal and interest are absolutely safe. Certificates are registered in your name at time of purchase, protecting you against loss or theft.

Certain Value

The Certificates are not subject to market fluctuations and cannot depreciate in value. They are always worth what you paid for them plus the interest.

Payment on Demand

You can withdraw your money at any time, without waiting until maturity of the Certificates. This provides for any emergency.

Many Attractive Features

In addition to the advantages already listed you will find many other attractions. For instance, any individual can buy Treasury Savings Certificates up to $5,000, face value, of any one series.

A new series is issued each year. Each member of the family can own up to $5,000 worth; likewise corporations, partnerships, associations, and joint-stock companies; or trustees; or two persons in the alternative, payable to either person or to the survivor; or an infant or infant's guardian; or the Certificates may be made payable to a beneficiary, that is, registered in the name of one person and upon his death payable to another.

The Certificates are exempt from State and local taxation (except estate and inheritance taxes) and from normal Federal income tax.

United States Treasury Savings Certificates may be purchased at Post Offices, Federal Reserve Banks, banks and trust companies, or direct from the United States Government Savings System, Treasury Department, Washington, D. C.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT SAVINGS SYSTEM

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.

You Might Call It Luck

If Only One Man Had Jumped to Such Amazing Earnings

-but Hundreds Have Done It!

WHEN a man steps from a $50 a month job as a farmhand to a position that paid him $1,000 the very first month—was it luck?

When another man leaves a job on the Capitol Police Force at a salary of less than $1,000 a year and then in six weeks earns $1,800—is that luck?

Probably the friends of Charles Berry of Winterset, Iowa, and of J. P. Overstreet of Denison, Texas—the two men mentioned above—call them lucky. But then there is F. Wynn of Portland, Ore., an ex-service man who earned $554.37 in one week—and George W. Kearns of Oklahoma City, whose earnings went from $60 a month to $524 in two weeks. And C. W. Campbell of Greensburg, Pa., who quit a clerking job on the railroad to earn $1,562 in thirty days.

"Last week my earnings amounted to $554.37; this week will go over $400."—F. Wynn, Portland, Ore.

There is nothing exceptional about these men. They live in all parts of the country—they had been engaged in all kinds of work. Many had been clerks, bookkeepers, mechanics. Some had already achieved successful places in the business world.

No Limit to the Opportunities

And then in one swift stroke, they found themselves making more money than they had ever dreamed possible. The grind of routine work—the constant struggle to obtain even a slight increase in earnings—the discouraging drudgery of blind-alley jobs—all this was left behind for careers of immediate and brilliant success. And great as are their earnings today, they are looking forward to increasing them constantly—in fact, there is no limit to the amounts they may earn—only their own efforts can determine that.

The remarkably quick success of these men sounds like luck—the sheerest kind of luck. But of course it cannot be that—not when hundreds have found the way to such amazing good fortune—*all through the same method.* There must be a definite, practical, workable plan behind their sudden jumps to big earnings.

"I had never earned more than $60 a month. Last week I cleared $306 and this week $218."—Geo. W. Kearns, Oklahoma City.

The Back-Bone of Business

And there is. In the first place they discovered a vital fact about business. They discovered that the big money is in the Selling end of business. Salesmen are the very life blood of any concern—upon them depends the amount of profits made.

And for the men who are in the "Star" class—who are Masters of Salesmanship—there is practically no limit to their earnings.

And that is how the men whose pictures you see and hundreds of others like them, found the way to their present magnificent incomes. *They are all Master Salesmen now!*

New Way to Enter This Field

Yet previously they had no idea of becoming Salesmen—many didn't even think it possible to do so. But they learned of an amazingly easy way by which any man can quickly become a Master Salesman—and in his spare time at home!

"The very first month I earned $1,000. I was formerly a farmhand."—Charles Berry, Winterset, Iowa.

Secrets Only Master Salesmen Know

Salesmanship is not a natural gift—it is an art and science that is open to any man. There are fundamental rules and principles that anyone can put into practice—there are Secrets of Selling that put any man who knows them into the "Star" class.

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"After ten years in the railway mail service I decided to make a change.... My earnings during the past thirty days were more than $1,000."—W. Hartle, Chicago, Ill.

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Whether or not you have ever thought of becoming a Salesman, you should examine the facts about the tremendous possibilities for big earnings in this fascinating field. Read the extraordinary stories of others and see how easily you can do what they are doing. The PROOF is so overwhelming that it may mean the turning point in your life, as it has in so many others. Simply mail the coupon below. It will bring you by mail the whole wonderful story, and in addition a great Book "Modern Salesmanship" and full particulars about the remarkable system of Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service of the N. S. T. A.

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Address...

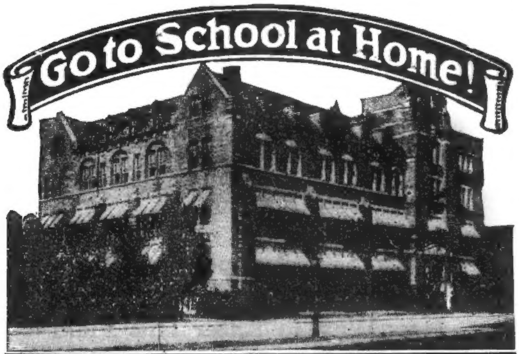
City............................State............

Age.............Occupation.........................

EVERYBODY'S
August 1922

Published monthly by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $2.50 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Aug. 16, 1899, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entered as second-class matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada.

Volume XLVII
Number 2



High School Course in Two Years!

You Want to Earn Big Money!

And you will not be satisfied unless you earn steady promotion. But are you prepared for the job ahead of you? Do you measure up to the standard that insures success? For a more responsible position a fairly good education is necessary. To write a sensible business letter, to prepare estimates, to figure cost and to compute interest, you must have a certain amount of preparation. All this you must be able to do before you will earn promotion.

Many business houses hire no men whose general knowledge is not equal to a high school course. Why? Because big business refuses to burden itself with men who are barred from promotion by the lack of elementary education.

Can You Qualify for a Better Position

We have a plan whereby you can. We can give you a complete but simplified high school course in two years, giving you all the essentials that form the foundation of practical business. It will prepare you to hold your own where competition is keen and exacting. Do not doubt your ability, but make up your mind to it and you will soon have the requirements that will bring you success and big money. YOU CAN DO IT.

Let us show you how to get on the road to success. It will not cost you a single working hour. Write today. It costs you nothing but a stamp.

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....Photoplay Writer
....Mechanical Engineer
....Shop Superintendent
....Employment Manager
....Steam Engineer
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An Easy Way to Remove Dandruff

If you want plenty of thick, beautiful, glossy, silky hair, do by all means get rid of dandruff, for it will starve your hair and ruin it if you don't.

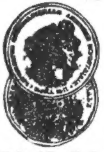
The best way to get rid of dandruff is to dissolve it. To do this, just apply a little Liquid Arvon at night before retiring; use enough to moisten the scalp and rub it in gently with the finger tips.

By morning, most, if not all, of your dandruff will be gone, and three or four more applications should completely remove every sign and trace of it.

You will find, too, that all itching of the scalp will stop, and your hair will look and feel a hundred times better. You can get Liquid Arvon at any drug store. A four-ounce bottle is usually all that is needed.

The R. L. Watkins Co., Cleveland, Ohio.

Stop Using a Truss



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(34)

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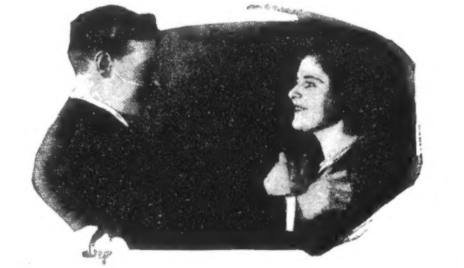

A Big Raise in Salary

Is Very Easy to Get, if You Go About It in the Right Way

You have often heard of others who doubled and trebled their salaries in a year's time. You wondered how they did it. Was it a pull? Don't you think it. When a man is hired he gets paid for exactly what he does, there is no sentiment in business. It's preparing for the future and knowing what to do at the right time that doubles and trebles salaries.

Remember When You Were a Kid

and tried to ride a bike for the very first time? You thought that you would never learn and then—all of a sudden you knew how, and said in surprise: "Why it's a cinch if you know how." It's that way with most things, and getting a job with big money is no exception to the rule, if you know how.

We Will Show You How

Without loss to you of a single working hour we can show you a sure way to successs and big pay. A large number of men in each of the positions listed are enjoying their salaries because of our help—we want to help you. Make check on the coupon against the job you want and we will help you get it. Write or print your name on the coupon and send it in today.

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Send me full information on the subject checked and how you will help me win success.

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....Electrical Engineer
....Electric Light & Power
....General Education
....Vocational Guidance
....Business Law
....Lawyer
....Machine Shop Practice
....Photoplay Writer
....Mechanical Engineer
....Shop Superintendent
....Employment Manager
....Steam Engineer
....Foremanship
....Sanitary Engineer
....Surveyor (& Mapping)
....Telephone Engineer
....Telegraph Engineer
....High School Graduate
....Fire Insurance Expert
....Wireless Radio
....Undecided

Name..

Address...

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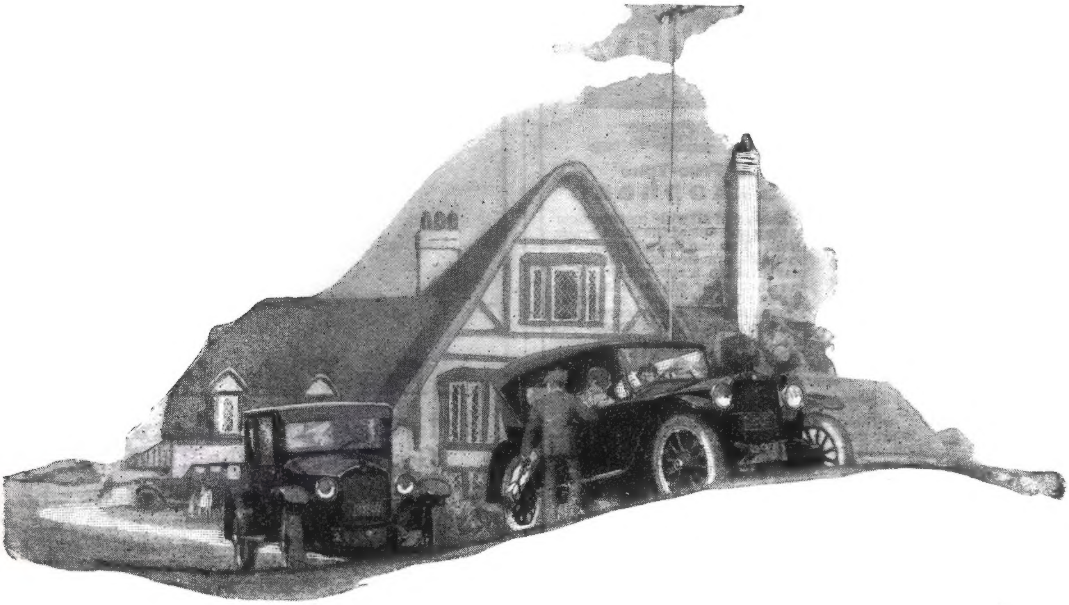

It is fortunate for Hupmobile owners that our engineers have large manufacturing facilities at their exclusive command.

In the Hupmobile's own plants, motor, transmission, clutch, axles, and other essential parts, are built to Hupmobile design, for the exclusive use of the Hupmobile.

No compromise of good designing or fine manufacturing is ever forced upon our engineers. They are entirely free from limitations they might meet if they were dependent, for some vital parts, on outside manufacturing sources.

Through years of experience they have developed a perfect harmony among working parts that tends to increase the economy and efficiency of individual units, and of the entire assembly.

This may explain Hupmobile performance—the kind of performance that means sailing up the average low-gear hill, on high gear, and plugging through sand and mud on high.

The kind of pick-up that gets you away and free from city-street snarls. Brilliant performance not only when the car is new, but as long as it lasts, with the very minimum of tinkering and adjusting.

This may explain, also, economy records that stand almost alone, among cars of higher and lower price alike; and such a length of life that it seems a Hupmobile has no wear-out point.

Touring Car, $1250; Roadster, $1250; Roadster-Coupe, $1485; Coupe, $1835; Sedan, $1935. Cord Tires on all models. Prices F. O. B. Detroit—Revenue Tax Extra

Hupp Motor Car Corporation, Detroit, Michigan

Hupmobile

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Everybody's

NUMBER TWO AUGUST, 1922 VOLUME XLVII

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE RIDGWAY COMPANY
JAMES H. GANNON, President SEWELL HAGGARD, Editor C. H. HOLMES, Secy. & Treas.
SPRING AND MACDOUGAL STREETS, NEW YORK CITY

6, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, August 16, 1899, at the Post-Office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada. Yearly subscription, $2.50, in advance. Single copy, twenty-five cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. No extra postage for Canada.

EVERYBODY'S takes all reasonable precautions for handling manuscripts submitted, but assumes no responsibility for their safety.
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Coming in September

THE COMPLETE NOVEL

Rope By Holworthy Hall
A young couple who refused to fulfil the doleful prophecy of friends and relatives. Drama and the spirit of modern youth

THE NOVELETTE

White Hands Cling By Will Levington Comfort
In which an exuberant American faces east

SHORT STORIES

Behind the Lines By Hugh S. Martin
A secret-service agent among the enemy's forces

The Blessed Meek By Walter De Leon
What is a "nut comedian"?

The New House By Helen Redington
The courage of youth in love

"Gee! Let's Go!" By Henry Francis Granger
A little journey back home

Triangle By Donn Byrne
There's sentiment even in the hardest

Two serials—"A Flash of Gold," "The Soul-Scar"—and a play

September *EVERYBODY'S*—out August 15th

Everybody's

NUMBER TWO AUGUST, 1922 VOLUME XLVII

A Lesson for Everybody

SOME *have the knack of making life more agreeable for others, consequently for themselves, by being nice. Others have the habit of being the opposite. It is these who curse and provoke cursing.*

Unknown to the author, Everybody's *recently printed a little story by Bill Adams which was taken from a private letter. Though paid for it, Mr. Adams* "likes to think of something more to be considered than mere coin;" *so he goes out of his way to write a graceful appreciation.*

"There is in the fact of your having seen fit to publish my queer little letter something intangible and of a truer value," *he says.* "With no desire to intrude myself, I yet thought that I should like at least to dip my flag to you in passing.

"We, though the old-time ships are gone, yet each sail our own ship onward through life's sea, and one would indeed not wish to pass another wanderer on the waters with no greeting whatsoever.

"Life, a long passage from port to port, is oftentimes made the less sunny by a want of little friendships, I think; and I like to think that every one is my own close kin—all seamen, as it were—seated to chatter in the dog-watch about a little table, with queer tales for exchange and a good deal of lying and consequent laughter, and at all times good will."

We salute Mr. Adams as we pass on this bit of evidence that neither the gift of neighborliness nor the art of letter-writing is lost.

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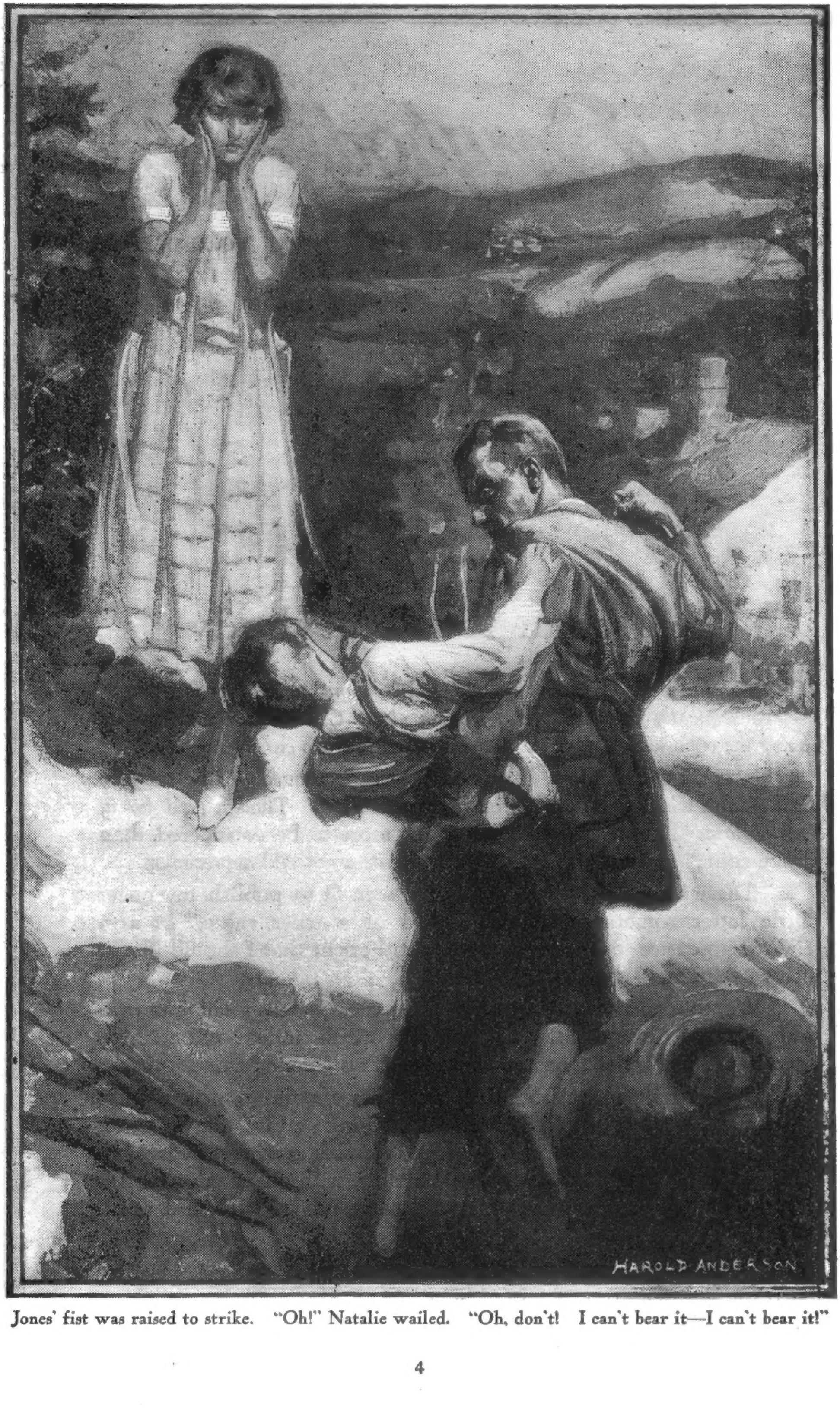

HAROLD ANDERSON

Jones' fist was raised to strike. "Oh!" Natalie wailed. "Oh, don't! I can't bear it—I can't bear it!"

Beginning a New Serial by the Author of "Twenty-four Hours"

THE SOUL-SCAR

Everybody's Received Enough Comments on "Twenty-four Hours" to Make Us Want Another Story. And Here It Is—a Mystery Story That Carries One to a Fearsome Spot in the Woods, Introduces Characters Tragic, Comic and Intensely Interesting—Particularly a Dear Lady Who Aspires to Be a Sherlock Holmes

By Beldon Duff

Illustrations by Harold Anderson

"'A BIRD-BATH with a mystery!' A mystery—the thing I've always longed for! That settles it. We go to Mink Harbor." Miss Merilda Tillinghast dropped the illustrated booklet she had been studying and looked at her niece with the air of one who expects opposition and is prepared to meet it.

The brown-haired girl across the breakfast-table did not disappoint her.

"Oh, Aunt Merilda," she wailed, "don't be carried away by one of those booklets! They're always full of twaddle about moonlight and mystery. If you're looking for excitement, pick out a regular hotel—one that's up and coming. Remember—this is the first trip you've ever had."

Miss Merilda selected a piece of toast from the rack and helped herself to jam.

"You don't understand," she said. "I don't want that kind of excitement. I want an adventure—something that will make up for all the humdrum years."

Her niece raised a well-bred eyebrow.

"Being mother, nurse, housekeeper and slave to Uncle Henry, you mean. I understand. But you'll never get an adventure out of Mink Harbor—never! Take my advice—cut out the mountains altogether and go to the shore."

Miss Merilda shook her head.

"Your Uncle Henry didn't like the sea. I could hardly spend the first of his money that way. It wouldn't seem quite right."

"Uncle Henry didn't like anything. He was a self-centered old pig, even if he did pass the plate every Sunday at St. Gude's. Oh"—as her aunt seemed about to speak—"you needn't say anything. Everybody knows he bullied the life and soul out of you as he wouldn't have dared to do if you'd been his wife instead of only an adoring older sister." She paused long enough to perk the bow on the shoulder of her negligee at her reflection in the coffee-urn. "You'll never catch me sacrificing myself for any man. It doesn't pay. How Uncle Henry ever came to leave you his stocks and bonds, instead of contriving some way of carrying them into the next world with him is the nine days' wonder."

Criticism of one so recently snatched from the family circle was, according to the Tillinghast standard, little short of blasphemy. Miss Merilda was shocked not to be shocked. Rather, it gave her the heady thrill of one who has tippled for the first time and found it "not so bad after all." With a suddenly audacious eye she swept the familiar four walls of the room.

"Natalie," she confided, "I want to get away from all this." The handle of the jam-spoon indicated the substantial walnut sideboard, the stiff, fiddle-back chairs and the Florentine-framed lady and gentleman on either side of the white-marble mantel. "I want to go off somewhere—somewhere that isn't so—so—respectable."

Her niece had the grace to start.

"Aunt Merilda!" she gasped, and then, wagging an accusing forefinger, "You've been reading some more of those trashy detective stories."

The older woman bridled indignantly.

"You're quite mistaken. I've been devoting my entire time to books on psychical research."

Natalie Mallinson broke into a joyous laugh and, darting round the table, smothered her relative in a grizzly-bear embrace.

"So it's spooks now, is it? Well, anyhow," she declared, "you're a dear, and I love you to pieces, even if you do think you're Sir Oliver Lodge and Sherlock Holmes rolled into one. Of course we'll go to this One Pine Inn, or whatever you call it, and find out about its bird-bath. While you're sleuthing into the mystery, I'll catch up some of the beauty-sleep I lost last winter. After all"—with a sudden change of tone—"if I'm to be married in October——"

Miss Merilda unclasped the arms that were wound so tightly about her throat and drew her niece down into her lap.

"You're sure," she asked, "sure you're not making a mistake? You love Andy Herrick?"

With a gentle tug the girl pulled free. Averting her face, she walked to the window, caught back the heavy curtains and stood for a moment silhouetted against the oblong of yellow sunlight.

She was a typically modern young woman with more than a suggestion of dynamic energy in the lithe, well-proportioned figure and small, sleek head. When at last she spoke in answer to her aunt's question, there was a good-natured flippancy in her tone that robbed the words of their seeming impertinence.

"Sure as sure, and then some!" she cried, adding, as she came back to her chair: "Why not be frank about it? I *must* have money. I was never cut out for this 'paradise enow' business. The jug of wine—what is it? Home brew! The loaf of bread—nothing but baker's, and stale at that; and as for the bough in the wilderness—ugh!—the very thought makes me creep. You know how I loathe camping out and everything that appertains to a picnic. Give *me* a table at the Ritz, a head waiter who knows me by name and a good floor to dance on!"

To all of which pagan philosophy Miss Merilda listened with a sigh and a shake of the head.

THREE days later, as the little lake steamer *Wamapee* rounded the point into Mink Harbor, she carried two passengers who viewed the nearing shore-line with markedly opposite emotions.

For the first time in the twenty-two and a half years of her life, Natalie Mallinson was frankly bored.

"What a hole!" she murmured, lifting her face to the high and cloudless sky above her. "What a God-forsaken hole!"

Miss Merilda, true to her purpose, was all aquiver with a new, intoxicating joy. An air of expectancy enveloped her. She saw only the possibility of romance in the forlorn huddle of buildings by the water's edge. To her, the breath from the pines whispered of secrets; the long shadows in the rushes were dark with meaning. Even the green sentinel mountains which rimmed the horizon, the sullen, overfed mill-stream, dropping so soundlessly across its low dam into the open waters of the lake, looked a promising background for the adventure she had come to find.

"What a wonderful place!" she cried. "What a wonderful, wonderful place!"

Her niece turned.

"What's so wonderful about it? It's stupid and commonplace. Nothing's ever happened here—nothing ever could happen. You can't tell me—" She was interrupted by a furious churning of water, a ringing of bells, the scurrying of feet—a bump. The *Wamapee* was docking. There was no time to argue the matter further. "Come on," she said resignedly; "let's be moving." And then, because it was the last word and she could not resist it, "Hope you observe—we're the only ones getting off."

Miss Merilda had observed. In her opinion, their fellow passengers were a poor lot, anyway. The sooner they were rid of them the better. But whether they came or stayed, Mink Harbor was going to turn out all right. With a firm tread she led the way across the deck and down the shaky gang plank.

Natalie Mallinson never could explain what happened next. She said afterward that it felt exactly as though the little lake steamer had sighed. It was an unexpected move—that sudden settling of the *Wamapee* to her dock, and, like a sly thrust against a line of upended dominoes, it started events tumbling one upon another in mad succession. Rich men, poor men, beggar-men, thieves, a woman whose name had echoed across two continents, a singer with a voice that had held a Metropolitan audience, an idiot boy, a strong man from a circus were all caught in the far-reaching grip of its influence and hurled pell-mell into a chaos of suspicion, horror and—tragedy.

As for Natalie, she had no time to figure out the why and wherefore. As the boat shifted, her absurd French heels skidded on the wet planks; her hand snatched at the rope rail and missed. To her horror, everything tangible seemed to fall away; someone—it might have been herself—cried out in a weak, far-off voice; her body shot forward and she saw the black waters of the lake rising to meet her.

From behind a clump of bushes near the landing-stage, a young man had searched the crowded upper deck of the *Wamapee* with eager eyes. Not until it became apparent that the two women were the only ones getting off did his powerful body relax, his breathing resume its normal, rhythmic sound. He had just sauntered from his place of concealment when Natalie lost her balance and slid over the side of the gang-plank.

THE newcomer combined hair-trigger intelligence with Fokine feet. Before the other passengers knew what had happened, there was a rush, a deep-chested word of command, and the girl, still dazed, had been whisked through space and landed high and dry in the middle of the rotting raft that was Mink Harbor's apology for a dock.

A lingering pressure from the arms that had saved her brought to Natalie the sudden consciousness of a peculiar insistence in their embrace—an embrace which, to her amazement, stirred her unaccountably. With a conviction that the fluttering of her heart had betrayed itself, she struggled free.

"I'm quite all right. Let me go! I don't need any——"

"Any what?" There was intentional insolence in the question, as indeed, now, she realized there was in the man's whole manner. He towered above her, his shoulders sagging slightly forward, his eyes boring deep into her own, his lips drawn in a queer, one-sided smile.

Unmindful of the stares of the curious, unmindful of a deck-hand who was motioning her to stand aside, unmindful of time, of place, of everything but the face before her, Natalie stood, her mind grappling with an illusive, tantalizing impression. Like a fragment of a film on the silver screen, it had been there just for a moment—a memory of that face. It seemed to stand out from a mist of other faces, not as now, but fixed in a mask of fury all the more terrible because of that same mirthless grin. Where—where had she seen it before? And even as she asked herself the question, she caught a gleam of amusement below the surface of those steady gray eyes—an almost boyish pleasure at her bewilderment. "He recognizes me, too—only, it doesn't suit his convenience to admit it," she thought, and, like a wrestler caught at a disadvantage, felt her muscles tighten for the struggle that some inner consciousness told her must inevitably come between them.

"Natalie, when you've quite finished hobnobbing with this stranger, perhaps you can pay some attention to *my* condition." It was the voice of Miss Merilda plaintively asserting the rights of the elderly relative. With almost military precision, the man wheeled toward her.

"I'm Jones," he announced tersely, "the clerk of the One Pine Inn. I've come to fetch you."

A clerk—nothing but a clerk in a country boarding-house; yet he had dared— Something seemed to snap in Natalie's brain. She flung a look over her shoulder. The *Wamapee* was already fifty yards from shore and fussily gathering headway for the remainder of its trip up the lake. Obviously there was no hope of getting away and, besides, the Tillinghast family pride demanded reprisals. The small chin shot up and out at an aggressive angle; the blue-veined lids flattened until the lashes at the corners lay a thick black smudge along the rounded cheeks. It was a trick retained from childhood and always preceded a tantrum. No one who knew Natalie Mallinson well would have been deceived by the honeyed words with which she placated Miss Merilda or by the buoyant elasticity of the step which spanned the distance to the waiting jitney.

Jones, who had already reached the little car, snapped open the door and stretched out his hand. From his manner, it could be seen he was not aware how seriously he had blundered. Nor did he at first appear to understand when the girl swept by him and took her place unaided. He looked at his still-extended palm with the curious expression of one who hopes to find the answer to a riddle written out in terms of plain English. Evidently the answer was not to his liking, for, when Miss Merilda panted up, still twittering from a wrangle with the baggage-man, he wasted no further time on the punctilios. Her startled grunt as she shot through the narrow back door and hurdled over her niece bore eloquent testimony to the savageness of the short-arm jab that had lifted her from the roadway.

"Well, I never!" she began; but the clerk was addressing himself to the thick-set youth who occupied the driver's seat.

"Let her out, Bill," he ordered. "I'll be on your trail directly with the buckboard and the trunks," adding, possibly by way of explanation to the occupants of the back seat: "The roads are in bad shape. I'd like to have you make it before dark."

Natalie, eager for him to turn and give her an opening, waited; but, without so much as a glance in her direction, he stepped aside, made as though to lift his cap, abruptly changed his mind and, straightening to his full height, tapped the peak with a respectful forefinger. As he walked away, his lips twitched, and again she caught a glimpse of that sidelong smile.

FROM somewhere in the interior of the jitney came a dreary clanking; the engine buzzed, and Bill, the chauffeur, one eye over his khaki-colored shoulder, coaxed his dilapidated steed out of the narrow alley beside the landing. By a series of short rushes and violently punctuated retreats, he had almost succeeded in completing the maneuver when Jones reappeared. Springing on the running-board, the clerk thrust his hand into his coat pocket and drew out a small, flat white package tied with red string. At sight of it, Bill shied like a nervous horse.

"I won't take it!" he muttered, edging farther into his corner. "I told her this morning I wouldn't be mixed up with it."

For a moment it seemed as though Jones might add the persuasive argument of a well-aimed fist, but, as quickly as it had come, the coppery flush faded from his cheek—his tense shoulders relaxed. Tossing the package on the seat, he dropped back into the road and strode off in the direction of the baggage-shed.

Natalie leaned forward until she could see over the back of the seat. The cause of all the trouble lay just where it had fallen—not six inches from Bill's hand. There was no mark on the white surface under the red string, no label, no indication of any kind as to its contents. As she watched, the chauffeur reached out reluctantly and, still muttering, thrust the thing into the mail-bag at his feet. The next instant they were tearing up the uneven road.

Miss Merilda's first words showed that she had missed nothing of the scene between the two men.

"What did I tell you?" she hissed, clutching at her niece for support. "What did I tell you, Natalie? Even the air in this place vibrates with mystery. Didn't you see—Merciful heavens!"—as the car leaped over a thank-you-ma'am and righted itself with a crazy lurch. "Tell that creature in the front seat to be careful. He almost ditched us that time."

Natalie cleared her throat. Her sympathies had all been with Bill in his revolt against the domineering clerk.

"I say, boy," she called "won't you please—" Her voice failed; her ears hummed as though she had suddenly shot up into air too light for her to breathe.

From round a bend in the road loomed a huge bulk—a loaded hay wagon drawn by plodding oxen that, in the half-light, looked as big as elephants. She heard a bleat from the horn and saw Bill clutch the wheel, caught his cry of warning as he made a mighty effort with the brake. Never had her senses been so agonizingly alert. She was conscious of the fragrance from the newly cut hay, of the warm, friendly smell of the cattle and of a hastily formed desire to die with her hat on. Flinging up both hands to her head, she closed her eyes.

THE capricious jitney curveted to one side, skimmed past the rick with less than an inch to spare and rolled over into the ditch.

Miss Merilda was, as usual, the first one to find her tongue. From under the lap-robe and the greater part of the hand-luggage, she chirruped like an angry cricket.

"Natalie, I wish to get out. I wish to get out at once. This is *not* the sort of thing I meant. This is an accident. When I said that I wanted an adventure, I had no desire to go home on a stretcher. Don't sit there, grinning—help me."

Controlling herself with an effort, the girl obediently set to work on the litter of bags and packages. After considerable exertion and one slip that ruined the hat-box, she succeeded in extricating her indignant relative and hauling her up the slippery bank to a harbor of safety among the ferns and giant toadstools that rioted on all sides.

In the mean time, Bill, indifferent to the fate of his passengers, had turned his attention to the jitney. It was buried to the hubs on one side in the soft mud, and defied his every effort to work it free. The harder he tried the tighter it stuck. He kicked; he coaxed; he even put his shoulder to the back and tried by main force to lift it. The hay wagon and its driver caught his eye. In his exasperation, he shouted,

"Come here, you boob; gimme a lift!"

The farmer's boy had neither moved nor spoken. Filled with a loose-lipped wonder, he sat, his dark eyes staring out of his pale face—two raisins in a rice pudding of a background—soggy, expressionless. To Natalie, they typified the nameless something that was wrong with Mink Harbor—still-born hopes, lives that had died before they had lived, stagnation, decay. She was still lost in her mood when Jones rattled up with the buckboard and the trunks. As he tossed aside the reins, Miss Merilda launched into a recital of her woes.

"Jones, I thought I was killed, and even now I'm not sure but that somewhere inside—somewhere that doesn't show—there may be a few broken bones."

Jones had not heard. He was looking past her, his whole thought for the girl at her side.

"Are you hurt?" There was the gruff note of anxiety in his voice.

Though she stood some five feet above him, Natalie felt a sudden sense of smallness—of youth, of inexperience. Was she always going to have ridiculous things happen to her before this man? Couldn't he have stayed away until they were back in the car and everything was all right? Once more the unreasonable desire to punish him for—she hardly knew what—swept over her.

"I can't see that it makes the slightest bit of difference to *you*," she said finally, "whether we're hurt or not."

It was a childish outburst. She could have bitten her tongue off for having made it. What its effect was on the clerk she could only surmise, for he ignored it completely. With a barely perceptible lift of the shoulder, he turned on his heel, crossed to the jitney, pulled off his coat and set to work.

An exhibition of efficiency—this business of doing alone what Bill and the farmer's boy together had failed to do. Natalie boiled inwardly as she watched the play of muscle in the man's broad shoulders. He was enjoying himself, she felt sure—showing off before an audience. It irritated her to hear the engine thrum so soon, to see the wheels revolve their way out of the ooze with only a few squdgy, sucking protests.

Miss Merilda was the first to leave the bank. Fuming, squeaking, criticizing, she was lifted over the ditch and bundled into her old place on the back seat; but when Natalie made a move to follow her, Jones held out a detaining hand.

"A sick car, that," he warned. "It'll only carry one passenger. You go with me." Snapping his fingers, he signaled to Bill.

The jitney, with an asthmatic cough, limped away.

The long shadows of night lay thick across the road. From the woods on either side came the insistent chirping of insects. A rabbit rustled out, stared inquiringly and rustled back. In the distance the first melancholy hoot of an owl. The girl felt as though she were standing on the threshold of a strange door. Behind lay the comfortable world of familiarity; beyond, the untried, the unexplained, possibly the—unfortunate. A sense of impending evil made her turn on the man by her side.

"Call back that car!" she demanded, and

then, as he made no move to obey, "Aunt Merilda—oh, Aunt Merilda!"

With the soundless leap of a mountain-lion, the clerk of the One Pine Inn was up the bank. Catching her to him, he smothered her cries against the rough tweed of his coat. His powerful arms crushed her sides as he lifted her over the muddy ditch to the seat of the buckboard. Hoisting himself up beside her, he slapped the reins across the back of the bay. The willing little beast strained against the traces; the wheels creaked in the wagon-ruts.

During the ride, neither one of the occupants of the buckboard spoke. Now and then, in the gathering dusk, Natalie knew the man's eyes were on her, but not once did he volunteer an explanation, offer an apology.

It was dark by the time the inn was reached. From out the blackness, the disembodied voice of Miss Merilda shrilled a greeting.

"Natalie, it's better than I expected! No electric light, no telephone. Fancy how romantic—a place in this day and generation without a telephone!"

In her haste to avoid the clerk, Natalie slipped out of the buckboard on the wrong side and missed the path. Wading through grass almost to her knees, she stumbled against something. With a horrible sense of unreality, she stood staring; the next moment she was flying up a steep flight of steps to the broad bosom of her aunt.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Out there in the grass—did you see it?—all long and white and——"

"What you saw just now, Miss Mallinson, was our bird-bath—quite harmless, I assure you." The voice of Jones—dry, incisive—was close behind her.

Natalie caught her breath.

"I—I thought it was a coffin!" she stammered. "It's so—so——"

"No; just an old horse-trough masquerading under a new name. You may remember, it was mentioned in our booklet—'a bird-bath with a mystery'—should have been 'history,' but the printer ran out of 'h's' or something. Here's Miss Pringle; she'll vouch for what I say."

And Natalie, catching Miss Merilda's snort of disgust, snapped back to normal. So the "mystery" had been a mare's nest after all. Perhaps now her aunt would be satisfied to go to some modern hotel that boasted a few creature comforts.

THE next half-hour was a confused blur of strange rooms and stranger people, through which the meager figure of Miss Pringle, the innkeeper, flitted like a shadowy gray bat.

To Natalie, the interior of the house fulfilled the promise of the Harbor. It was a hundred years behind the times. Pools of yellow radiance from candles, the only lighting, melted on the time-discolored floors, leaving jungles of unexplored dark in every corner; slow-footed country girls in caps and ruffled aprons brought food and stared stolidly while it was eaten; a heavy odor of kerosene and damp boughs that some one was trying to coax into a fire filled the air, and every now and then rustlings and whisperings, coming from nowhere in particular, disturbed the stillness.

Once she caught a glimpse of Jones, his jaws set, his brows drawn, entering the office back of the stairway, and, later, of Miss Pringle, as she came out. The woman looked more than ever like an uneasy creature of the night. With a nervous, sidelong step she crossed the hall, taking care to keep her face turned away from the light as she dabbed furtively at her eyes with a limp square of embroidered cambric.

When at last they were settled in their rooms on the floor above, it was Miss Merilda who delivered the ultimatum:

"Don't unpack a thing! We leave in the morning. Did you *ever* taste a worse meal in all your life? Fish, fish—nothing but fish—and not even fresh fish at that! What nerve that woman has—trying to tell me it was just out of the water! Doesn't she think I know a Spanish mackerel when I see it, not to mention smell it? The last time that fish was in his native element, he was a good way from Mink Harbor. If this is what comes of visiting a lake, I'm through. Here"—pausing before the old-fashioned bureau—"get me something to lay over this chair. I don't want to ruin everything I've got. I thought I'd have to be pried loose from a rocker on the porch. What have they been doing to the place, anyway—decorating it for a food show?"

Sure enough, on the backs of chairs, on the headboard of the bed, on the wash-bowl and lamp-shade, there were stenciled fantastic bunches of a fruit that would have driven Luther Burbank mad with envy. With an amused shake of the head, Natalie rose and crossed the room.

Miss Merilda sank limply down on the towel spread for her protection and opened her dressing-case. It was her habit—a habit that nothing short of an earthquake could have interrupted—to wind her straggling front locks every night on a set of tin instruments of torture known as "hair-curlers." The operation invariably made her garrulous.

"I'll admit," she began, "that we've made a mistake. Without a mystery it isn't much of a place; but how was any one to know that a printer would do a thing like that? History, indeed! I'll suppose they'll say George Washington slept in this horse-trough—he's slept in most everything, if you believe the stories people tell. But then"— she paused, a hopeful gleam in her eye—"there was that package—you remember that package, Natalie, and how the chauffeur acted. He was—" A sharp rat-a-tat on the door. She let her voice slide up an octave. "Come in!"

The face of Miss Pringle, wreathed in a toothy smile, ingratiated itself an inch or two into the room. She spoke in a soft, oily voice.

"Is there anything, Miss Tillinghast, that you would care to have before retiring for the night?"

Miss Merilda turned—Medusa of the Snaky Locks—every tin curler vibrating with rage.

"Yes!" she boomed. "I'd like to have a hold on the person who got up that booklet of yours."

There was a gasp. The door clicked shut. Miss Merilda snorted triumph.

"There—I guess that's settled her, the old hypocrite, sending out booklets with mysteries in 'em, and after you've come three hundred miles, all excited, telling you it was just a mistake! In the morning we leave."

IF ALL the plans laid in the evening hatched out overnight, the world would move considerably faster on its axis than at the present moment. Morning found Miss Merilda's arrangements topsyturvy. Her old enemy, lumbago, made it impossible for her to leave the One Pine Inn that day.

As an invalid, Natalie discovered, her aunt was a trying proposition. She demanded a thousand and one things and she demanded them right away—a handkerchief, a drink, a fresh pillow, a newspaper. There was only one newspaper in the house—a Boston *Journal*, two days old. Fortunately for the distracted girl, there happened to be a choice bit of scandal on the front page.

"So the Clayton Hitchcocks are going to get a divorce," purred Miss Merilda, lying back, contented at last. "I always said that Clay Hitchcock couldn't live with a woman like that. He's stood for her fads longer than any one expected him to—collecting snakes and snuff-boxes and outlandish jewelry, besides running about foot-loose with every Tom, Dick and Harry from United States senators down to boys in their first long trousers. I wonder if there's a man mixed up in it this time. There's that queer, long-haired poet"—checking them off on her fingers—"and Schuyler Channing."

Schuyler Channing, son of "Dry Dock" Channing, millionaire ship-builder of San Francisco, was one of the old lady's pet topics of conversation. He had ricocheted from the society columns through the sporting-page and the withering white light of first-sheet head-lines straight into her heart. Natalie stirred impatiently.

"Auntie," she said, "you don't know one thing about those people except what you've read in the newspapers." And then, recollecting the irritation of the morning: "But I'm glad you've found something to interest you. I'll go see if the mail has come. There may be a later edition in that."

Down-stairs, the place was deserted. Except for a canary, shrilling his midday song in a patch of sunlight over the office desk, there was no living thing in sight. The open doorway framed a world of unbroken spaces—rolling acres of green, fringed by forests and walled in by a misty line of blue-capped mountains—all uninhabited—no sign of man or beast.

Wandering aimlessly across the porch with its army of deserted rocking-chairs, she paused to count the steps leading to the tangle of unmowed lawn below. Twenty-two—an ugly, ragged flight, as steep as a ladder and almost as difficult to maneuver. Why should any builder have conceived such an atrocity? A tour of inspection, and the answer was plain. The One Pine Inn was perched on the side of a hill. At the back, the porch was flush with the ground; at the front, it had to be supported by uprights and girders. The steps were a necessity. Under them, in the extra half-story, was the kitchen.

ALL this time Natalie had encountered no one, but, as she turned from the house, came the queer feeling that she was being watched. Half-way to the road she yielded to her mood and looked back. Did a curtain at an upper window fall hastily into place or had her nerves played her a trick? Twice she moved a few paces, twice wheeled sharply. Not a leaf stirred in the lazy air, and yet she could not rid herself of the thought. Some one had a reason for being interested in her goings and comings—a reason; but what? With a growing uneasiness she turned and found at her feet—the bird-bath.

Even in the light of day it retained its resemblance to a coffin. The nasturtiums growing about the rim might have been the last tributes from loving friends, the tall hollyhocks candles in their sockets. It was all she could do to keep from looking to see what the shadowy depths might contain.

With a healthy contempt for her morbidness she turned away and, climbing to the flat rock on the top of the hill, spread her cape and lay down to think. The sun was warm—a grateful change after the pressing chill of the house—but hardly had her body relaxed when it came again—that feeling of surveillance. She was not alone—some one or something was hiding in the huckleberry bushes that fringed the rock. Her first impulse was to get up and run, but she fought it with all the will-power at her command. No inhabitant of a place like Mink Harbor should have the pleasure of pinning a white feather on her hat-band. It was a courageous thought, but it did not sustain her for long. At last she knew that she must either speak or scream.

"Who's there?" Silence. "Who's there?" It terrified her to hear the sobbing intake of her own breath. "Who's there, I say?"

The bushes parted and a face pushed its way into view—the face of the farmer's boy whose hay wagon had ditched them the day before. Its vacant, puzzled expression recalled unpleasantly her feelings as she had stood huddled on the bank by the side of the disabled car.

"What do you mean, following me that way?" Her fear had changed to anger.

He came forward on his stomach, his whole body wriggling after the manner of a dog trying to ingratiate itself with a new master. Holding his tattered straw hat before him, he pointed to something lying in the depths of the crown.

"For you," he mouthed, "because you are a pretty lady."

Natalie followed the pointing finger. In the hat were a dozen mangled butterflies.

"You horrid boy!" she cried. "What have you done to them?"

"Fixed them for your hair. It's a crown of glory—glory, glory hallelujah!" he chanted and, with a meaning finger against his chest, "Sammy Todd's a smart boy—he knows something." Crawling a step nearer, he went on in a sly whisper, "Something about—down there!" His clawlike hand traced a semicircle toward the inn.

Natalie shrank back.

"Go away—go away! I don't want you to come near me."

The face was suddenly lit by a gleam of cunning.

"If you don't want to hear it from me, ask Jones. Ask him what he buys over to Lakeport, by the railroad station. Ask him what's in the little white package and who gets it? Ask him——"

A shadow fell across the rock. With a long-drawn whimper, the keening of a trapped animal, the boy darted to his feet; but before he could turn to run, a muscular arm shot out and he was caught by the collar.

"You little interfering devil! I told you if I found you snooping round here again I'd break your neck, and now, by——"

Natalie clapped her hands to her ears. It was Jones, his voice low—terrible. In palpitating horror she started at the picture of fury he presented. A brick-red haze seemed to envelope him like an aura. His eyes, two smoldering pits of hate, glared down at the writhing figure gripped in the crook of his left arm. His fist was raised to strike.

"Oh!" she wailed. "Oh, don't! I can't bear it—I can't bear it!"

At sound of her voice, the fist wavered.

There was a moment of indecision. The gripping arm relaxed; the prisoner was free. Jones turned and surveyed her coolly.

"You're funny," were his words, but the laugh that accompanied them rasped unpleasantly.

Natalie rose and stepped back. Again that sense of physical inequality made her seek the advantage offered by the rising ground. Her hands clasped and unclasped spasmodically; her breath came in gasps, as though she had been running. What would he do—this strange, undisciplined creature in whose arms she had twice felt herself as helpless as an infant? Would he— A sound from Sammy Todd. Her attention wavered.

His freedom gained, the boy had ducked out of reach and now, all ten fingers spread in derision, was dancing a triumphant bacchanal among the huckleberry bushes.

"You see?" The clerk pointed. "He'll annoy you constantly." Then, as Natalie did not speak, he feigned a sortie that sent his tormentor scuttling off into the thicket.

Free for the moment of that dominating presence, the girl turned in stumbling haste toward the inn; but hardly had she gone a dozen steps when Jones flung past her.

"What's the idea?" he demanded, motioning her to stop. "This up-stage business—what's it for? You act as though I wasn't fit to touch your little finger.. Are you one of those 'holier-than-thou' people who think a clerk isn't a human being?" His big hands twitched. "In order to get a nod from you, I suppose a man would have to have a family tree that had sheltered the original anthropoid ape. Or is it just a question of—money?"

Natalie winced, conscious that there was at least partial truth in his accusations; then suddenly her chin went up.

"I shouldn't think you'd have to ask," was the sharp reply. "It's your temper, your beastly temper that makes me hate you—you—you bully!"

"Oh! So you *hate* me, do you?" Again the short laugh. "I'm satisfied."

Natalie could have wept in her vexation. Why was she so unable to put this man in his place? Other men had always been deferential, almost fawning in their eagerness to gain her favor. There was Andy Herrick, for instance——

From directly behind her came a short, admonitory cough, and Bill, the chauffeur, appeared over the crest of the rock.

"What's up?" Jones asked shortly.

Bill went through a contortion with his neck that might have passed for a gesture.

"You better hurry," was all he said; but as the clerk joined him and they scrambled down the slope, he unbent far enough to add something under his breath of which Natalie only caught: "The other thing—worse'en we thought—we're all in for it now, I guess."

Whatever it was that was so much worse, it had its effect. Jones quickened his pace.

Natalie watched him disappear through the back door of the inn while the slower-footed Bill was still clumping over the rows of cabbages in the kitchen-garden.

Something was going on in Miss Pringle's establishment, but—her shoulders went up—why meddle in other people's business? See what had almost happened to Sammy Todd for being a meddler! The scene on the top of the rock came back with startling vividness. Would Jones, but for her, have carried out his threat and wrung the boy's neck? Impossible! No matter what the provocation, a man could not kill in cold blood—kill deliberately, with a smile on his face. Such fiendishness would be— And then—the blinding revelation! She remembered *where* she had seen that sidelong smile before. With a frantic feeling that she must have time to think it all out, she fled down the hill.

HER hope of slipping into the house unobserved was speedily shattered. At the foot of the stairs leading to her room stood Jones. From his attitude she was convinced that the meeting was not accidental. He had something to say, and he said it with his customary brutal directness.

"Miss Mallinson, when are you and your aunt going to leave?"

The girl drew back.

"What right have *you* to question a guest? Kindly let me pass."

"Wait!" He looked uneasy. "I'd rather you didn't tell Miss Pringle I said anything, but—you *must* go. This house is all wrong."

"You——"

"Hang it all! Don't look at me like that." And then, with a groan: "You're right—that temper of mine—it's forever getting me into scrapes. I'd give my shirt if I could conquer it, but—it's too deep in the grain. We've all had it—the men of my line. It's a birth-mark—a soul-scar."

The nails of Natalie's hands cut into the tender palms.

"Five years ago, on board *The Empress of Manchuria,* it was your soul-scar, I suppose, that sent a fellow human being to eternity."

The man before her went suddenly white. As though in a spasmodic nervous contraction, his lip drew back and his face set in that queer, distorted grin.

"What's a coolie more or less?" he asked huskily. "It was fate."

"It was murder!" she stoutly declared, and, brushing by him, mounted the stairs to her aunt's room.

MISS MERILDA greeted her niece's entrance with a gyrating movement of the right hand.

"Natalie," she exclaimed, as soon as the door had closed, "thank heaven you've come! I was right—there *is* a mystery in this house."

"A mystery?" The girl looked blank.

"Yes. Don't you remember why we came? This isn't the same mystery—it hasn't anything to do with the bird-bath, but—it's *terribly* exciting."

Natalie sat down on the side of the bed and listened to a jerky and incoherent story about Miss Pringle, a tea-tray and a half-opened door. When it was finished, she asked sharply:

"What were you doing in the hall? I thought your lumbago was too bad for you to move."

Miss Merilda set her lips.

"I'm always willing to suffer if it's in a good cause, and, besides, the worst of my attack is over. But there's no need telling that to any one, Natalie. I'll be more free to act if they get the impression that I'm still laid up. You remember where Sherlock Holmes let everybody think he was dead, so he could——"

"Whatever put it into your head"— her niece hastily forestalled a lengthy digression—"that there was anything unusual about this unnumbered room, as you call call it?"

Miss Merilda gave an exasperated flounce.

"Didn't I tell you about the tray in front of the door and the hand—the white, puffy-looking hand that reached out and pulled it in? They can't fool me—there's more than old furniture in that room!"

Natalie began to grow interested. That hastily lowered curtain at the upper window might not have been imagination after all.

"It's on the floor above?" she asked.

"Yes; in a cul-de-sac under the stairs leading to the roof—a likely place for hiding a maniac or—an escaped convict. Natalie, this is a mighty queer house. Every one in it has a past of some sort. Take the cook, for example—she belongs on the stage, a circus rider, vaudeville performer or something—doesn't live with her husband. They never do, of course, but in Tillie's case there's no divorce. She ran away from him just because he's a big no-account Swede and she doesn't like his looks. Then there's that good-for-nothing Bill and his brother—this Pringle woman wouldn't want a couple of cutthroats like that round her if she weren't up to something, would she? Oh, and yes"—Miss Merilda flopped triumphantly back among the pillows—"I'd almost forgotten. There's the other one—Jones. What do you think of *him?*"

"Who told you all this stuff?" asked Natalie, avoiding the issue. She had no desire to discuss the clerk with her aunt.

"One of the waitresses. She's a country girl—her brother is the boy whose hay wagon upset us yesterday."

Natalie sat for a moment, mentally fitting together a ragged chain of episodes. She said at last:

"Sammy Todd tried to tell *me* something, but I wouldn't listen to him. He's so— What's that?"

Slowly, far off, with the low menace of an approaching army, came the roll of thunder. The girl sprang to the window and pulled aside the cretonne curtain.

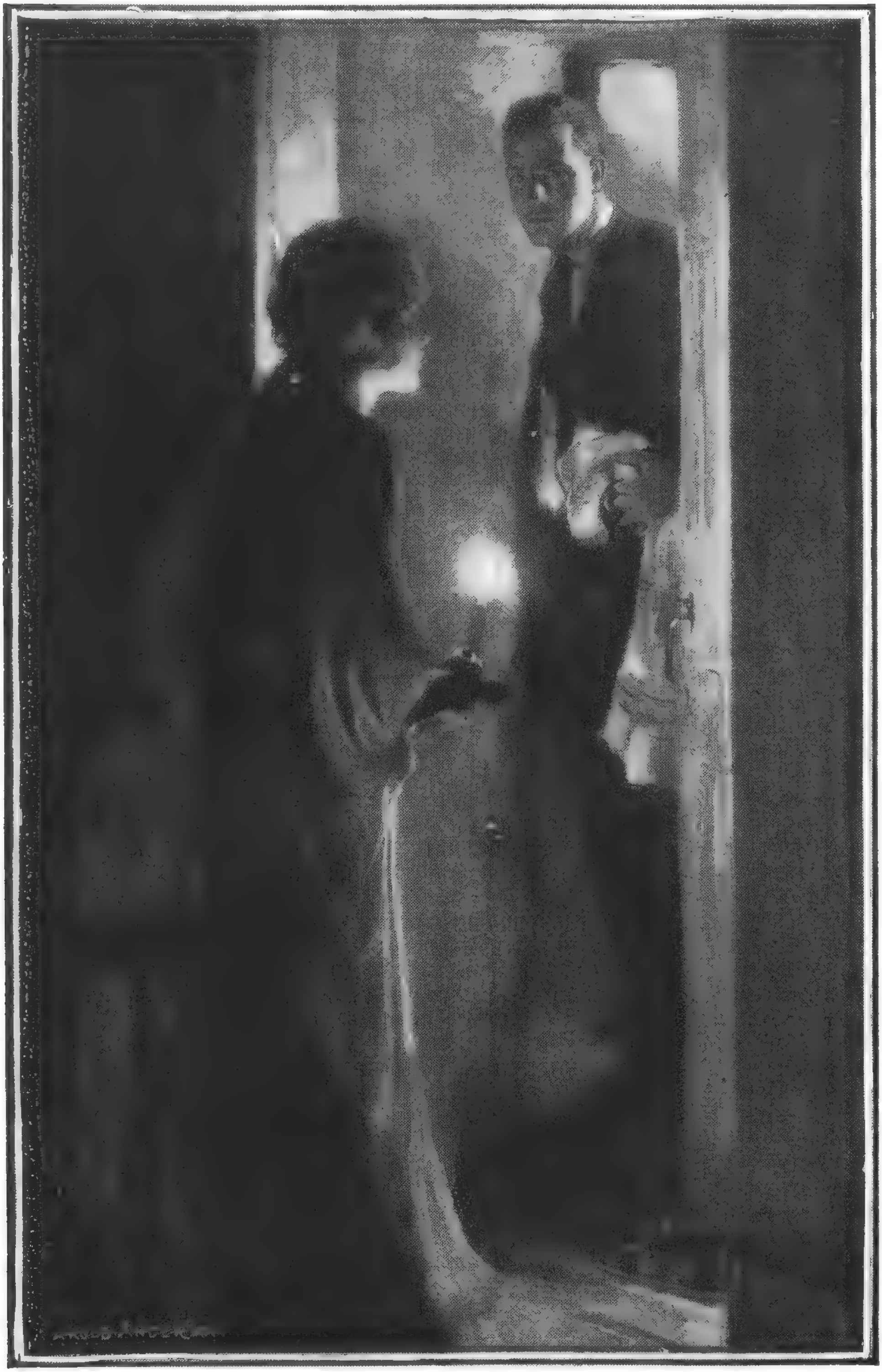
"Look!" she cried.

The blue had vanished; a leaden pall had settled over the world. In mid-sky hung the sun, yellow, metallic, flat as a platter and almost, so it seemed, within reach of her hand. Over the mountains to the left broke billows of blackness, tipped with a feathery foam of ghostly white clouds.

"A storm," said Miss Merilda in an awed whisper, "and a bad one."

Miss Merilda was afraid of storms.

By six o'clock that afternoon, the country



For a moment they stood facing each other. Then, "That's nothing," he said. "I—I was shaving—and cut myself."

for miles around Mink Harbor had felt the heel of the conqueror. Trees were torn up by the roots and hurled headlong over fences; gardens were stripped, houses battered. The roads had turned into yellow streams of mud, littered with broken branches, farm-implements and the occasional body of some small animal.

A dozen automobile-parties, driven from their course by the wind and rain, had found temporary refuge under the roof of the One Pine Inn. Their coming had made a change in the place. An air of activity, a stir, a bustle were to be felt on all sides. People ran up and down stairs calling to one another; bells rang; wet garments steamed cheerfully before the big open fire in the living-room.

It was impossible for Miss Merilda and Natalie not to be affected by the sudden lifting of the gloom that had seemed to hang over the place since their arrival. The girl went down-stairs a dozen times and came back with droll accounts of what was going on; but, despite every inducement, her aunt was stubbornly determined to play the invalid.

"No, Natalie; don't try to persuade me," she kept repeating. "All this noise and confusion can't change the circumstances. That room is still to be investigated. I stay where I am."

And stay she did, looking for all the world like a benign, elderly kewpie, propped up among the pillows—a steamer-rug across her knees, a boudoir cap at a rakish angle over one eye. Even the supper-bell and the prospect of a pick-up meal on a tray could not shake her.

Half-way down the stairs on her way to the dining-room, Natalie paused. The wind was singing a high, thin song of triumph among the tree-tops; the rain was splashing in zigzag rivulets down the window-panes. Could the crazy old house stand up against such a battery? She put out her foot to take the next step, and, as she did so, the front door flew open with a gusty bang, revealing a storm-beaten man and woman on the threshold.

The woman, despite her bedraggled garments, carried herself with the air of a princess. From where she stood on the stairs, Natalie watched her cross into the circle of light and lift the sodden veil which, up to that moment, had covered her face—a beautiful face, as pale and as clear-cut as a cameo. And then the girl's attention was drawn to Jones, who had come out of his place behind the office desk and was facing the newcomers.

"You!" was all he said, but his eyes, as they searched the pallid features before him, blazed with a hatred and contempt that seared like the hot blast from a prairie fire.

The woman snatched her veil into place and tunred to her companion with a torrent of low-voiced protests. A moment later, all three had crossed the hall and entered the office, closing the door behind them.

MORNING—dripping eaves—on breakfast—dispirited guests. Darkness and storm had played strange pranks upon the One Pine Inn. Here and there a shutter, pulled from its hinges, hung head downward like a fowl in a butcher shop; patches of damp, creeping insidiously over bedroom walls, etched fantastic patterns on the mildewed paper, and, as a crowning piece of mischief, the fat-bellied chimney at the back of the house had toppled over, sprinkling the kitchen with mortar and soot.

Natalie, who disliked baked beans when they were hot, would have died a thousand deaths rather than touch one cold. A single glance at the hastily spread breakfast-table sent her back to Miss Merilda's tea and zwieback.

Miss Merilda was, indeed, the only person in the inn who could lay claim to being comfortable. With her alcohol-stove and hot-water bottles, she had succeeded in keeping her blood in a fine glow. As usual, her enthusiasm was bubbling over.

"Wash out the tooth-brush mug, Natalie," she directed, "and draw up a chair. It's lucky for you, as well as for me, I didn't take your advice and leave my tea-making outfit home. That stuff Miss Pringle calls coffee is worse than prohibition beer. The only trouble with this sort of thing"—she dove among the pillows—"is the crumbs. Eating crackers in bed is worse than having the seven years' itch. Still, I'd rather— Hark to that wind!"—as a cold blast worked through the rickety window-frame and flapped the shade. "Is this the equinoctial or the end of the world?" And, as her niece sighed: "What's the matter now? You're having a good time, aren't you? If not—call it an experience."

"Experience! Ye gods!" The small lace-bordered handkerchief ripped in the grip of indignant fingers. "When I think that I had a perfectly good invitation to visit the Pattersons at Ferncliff——"

"Ferncliff!" Miss Merilda snorted scornfully. "A tailor-made house in a tailor-made surburb full of tailor-made people! Here, at *least* you can relax and be natural." The tea-things rattled as she settled herself expectantly, but her niece, who had gone to the window, made no response.

OUTSIDE, on the wet lawn, a robin was having a tussle with a reluctant angleworm. Natalie laid her cheek against the cold pane and watched the victor drag his victim into the open and peck it into a limp, nerveless bit of pulp. How cruel life was—one thing always preying on another! She sniffed in a surge of vicarious misery. And once she would have taken such a sporting interest in the chances of the worm. What had come over her? Was it a case of every one's being out of step but Willie, or was there really a sinister influence in this ramshackle old house? The fretful insistence of her aunt's voice disturbed her train of thought.

"Natalie, there's some one at the door. Why don't you see who it is?"

True enough, a faint scratching, as of metal on wood, was plainly audible. There was nothing terrifying in the sound, but aunt and niece stared at each other in sudden alarm. The door opened; a comely woman in spotless blue-and-white gingham came briskly into the room. In her hand was a tray. Natalie noted the well-poised set of her head with its coronet of smoothly braided yellow hair—Tillie, the circus performer, no doubt.

"Ah brang oop some toast an' bacon. The missus bane sorry it ain't good cookin' this mornin'." The newcomer laid two plates of scorched food on the bed beside Miss Tillinghast.

An appraising sniff, and that lady turned away with a flounce of disgust.

"In all conscience, Tillie, what's the matter with this place? It's falling to pieces."

"Oh, she hold pretty good." The Swedish woman looked about the room. "Houses, peoples—they all get old sometime." Her colorless voice put no innuendo into the words, but Miss Merilda flushed.

"Old people are the balance-wheels that keep this crazy old world from flying off its hinges," she snapped. "But this house ought to be Oslerized—pulled down—burned up." And then, as Tillie began phlegmatically to tidy the wash-stand: "Why won't Miss Pringle let any one go on the top floor? What's she afraid of?"

"Oop-stairs is all broke. Floors no good, ceilings no good. Last night, chimney—she fall down. Villum gone over by Lakeport for mason man to fix her."

"Come, now, Tillie"—Miss Merilda assumed the air of one who reasons with a fractious child—"it can't be as bad as all that. Just as soon as I'm able to walk, I believe I'll have to see what *is* up there."

The woman paused in the act of emptying the hand-basin and looked over her shoulder at the occupant of the bed. There was a contraction in the pupils of her pale eyes that caused Natalie to flash a look of warning at her aunt.

"Better stay away," she advised. "Ve don't vant no von should get hurted."

"But *you* go up there, and you always carry a tray with you."

Tillie wiped the basin with a practised hand, filled the pitcher and hung up fresh towels before she observed evenly:

"Ah bane minded my own business come thirty year. Each somebody should do by herself the same." Gathering up her dishes, she opened the door, pulled it to behind her with a dextrous foot, and was gone.

"You see how they behave?" Miss Merilda turned in triumph to her niece.

"I thought you weren't going to let them know you suspected anything." Natalie was struggling into a soft wool sweater which, to her irritation, caught on every hook on her dress.

"I didn't tell her I suspected anything, did I?" Miss Merilda managed an aggrieved droop to her lower lip. "I really think I've handled the situation so far with considerable finesse. Did you hear what she said about that hoodlum, Bill?"

"Yes." The sweater was on at last. "That's no secret. I saw him go. There's nobody at Mink Harbor who could fix the chimney—he'd have to try Lakeport, but it's almost fourteen miles."

"Well, if they don't get *something* fixed before night, I'll starve to death. Tea is all right in its place, but it's loose eating—doesn't stick to one's ribs." With a resigned sigh: "Like a good girl, fetch me the two copies of *Town Topics* from my trunk, and the book called 'Neither Visible Nor Invisible.' My spiritual cosmos can get some nourishment, even if my stomach goes empty. I expect *you'll* manage well enough. Young people never seem to mind so much about their food—a little fudge and a few marshmallows, and they can go for days, just like a camel."

And so the hours wore monotonously along. For Natalie, time had ceased to exist. Eternity—a cold, wearisome eternity—had begun. She tried to explain away the weight at her heart. She wrote to Andy Herrick:

> I think it's because I'm hungry. I feel as though I hadn't had a square meal in years. Remember that night we had the broiled steak and mushrooms at the Astor——

But she tore the letter up after all. Andy Herrick, somehow, seemed so far away.

In the middle of the afternoon Bill came back, and came alone. The horse was lathered from hard driving, the buckboard plastered with mud. Judging by appearances, he had not spent all his time looking for a mason. His breath was heavy with synthetic gin, his nerves jerky, unreliable.

"Wouldn't come," he announced sullenly. "I'm the only fool who'd go out on such a day. Chimney'll have to wait till rain lets up."

Miss Pringle received the information with a series of "Oh dears," and after ambling in distracted circles for a few moments, darted after Bill, who was already half-way across the porch.

"Get some logs for the living-room fire before you go—do; there's a good boy!"—patting the wet shoulder. "The guests, poor dears, are *so* miserable, and Jones has been on the roof all afternoon trying to see what he could do with the chimney——"

Bill cast off the hand.

"Say, lady; have a heart! I'm soaked to the skin. I'll get yer logs when I've put up the nag and took a squint at John."

He headed the little bay toward the barn, unharnessed her with rough tenderness, saw that she had her fill of water, and crammed the feed-box and manger.

"There," he said, as the soft nose nudged at his arm, "you've got a bellyful, even if the swells freeze to death."

Stamping out of the stall, he paused and, with an alert twist of the neck, looked sharply about him. The corners of the hay-loft were lost in a soft, sooty blackness. The cooing of pigeons, the crunching of the mare's teeth and the steady drip, drip of water were the only sounds.

Turning up his collar, he slopped his way to a long, low building in the rear, half hidden by a patch of woods. A bowling-alley in its day, there was nothing left now on the lower floor but a few warped balls, a battered heap of ninepins and fading chalk marks—scores that had once been a matter of pride.

WITH the air of a frequent visitor, Bill made his way to a ladder in a far corner and climbed to the loft. Here a room had been snugly boarded off, the crude carpentry covered with pictures garnered from motion-picture magazines and Sunday supplements.

From a cot near the window, a boy of eighteen started up. Flinging aside a yellow-backed novel and the half-fiinshed stub of a cigarette, he demanded:

"Where you been all day, Bill? I haven't had a thing to eat."

It would have been clear even to a casual observer that the two were brothers—Bill the elder, the stronger, the better equipped. The shoulders of the youth were stooped, the prominent cheek-bones accented by patches of color, while with almost every breath he cleared his throat—a dry, hacking sound.

There was no outward manifestation of brotherly devotion on the part of either, but Bill searched the small pinched face before him with an agonized intensity.

"Wait until I get out of this damn coat, kid," he placated. "I've got somethin' for you."

The boy dropped back on the cot and dextrously caught package after package, as they appeared from the pockets of the soaking mackinaw. When he had wolfed down the soggy delicacies, Bill drew out a hip-flask half full of Scotch.

"Hootch—gimme—" The fretful voice grew eager.

"Go light on that, John." The older brother yielded the flask. "It ain't good for you. Besides, we got work for to-night that'll need clear heads."

"What's the old girl up to now?"

"Miss Pringle ain't got nothin' to do with this. It's a snap I fell into over at Lakeport. Handled right, there's enough money in it to send you to Colorado. Look!" And he displayed two crisp yellow bills.

"Cripes!" Joh'ns glassy eyes bulged. "What is it? The old game?"

"Nix on that!" Bill settled himself heavily on the rickety camp-chair. "It's new, and it's neat."

FIVE O'CLOCK, that ebb-tide hour of human endurance, found Natalie wandering about the house, unable to settle down to anything. All day she had watched for the tall figure of Jones; but he had kept out of her way, whether purposely or not she could only surmise. It vexed her to feel her heart thump at every footstep, to start at the sound of every voice. By all the standards of her well-ordered existence, this man was a pariah—a transgressor against the laws of both God and Mammon; and yet his irritating mental complex interested her, kept her guessing. She was bringing up fresh teacups and hot water to Miss Merilda when, in a shadowy corner of the hall, she came upon him at last, deep in conversation with the woman whose arrival the night before had so visibly upset him. From his attitude, he was forcing home some point. The lean angle of his jaw looked hard, uncompromising. The woman, on the other hand, a dog held caressingly in either arm, was standing in a loose-limbed, arrogant pose, her head tilted back, an amused flicker in her half-closed eyes. As Natalie reached the top step, she saw Jones bury his clenched fist in his open palm.

"But you will!" He shot the words savagely. "You will—if it's the last act of your life—and mine!"

A loose board under her foot snapped a brittle warning and Jones, with a gesture that might have been despair, hurried away. The "princess-woman," as Natalie had nicknamed her, looked the intruder up and down with a cool, appraising stare. Then, as though satisfied that here was a person of too little importance to even ignore, said petulantly:

"I never knew it could storm like this. It's unendurable."

Natalie seized for conversation on the first idea that popped into her head.

"It's hard on us; but it's harder on the farmer, don't you think? I hear all the crops are ruined."

The princess-woman raised a slim white hand covered with diamonds and smothered a yawn.

"What difference do a few beets or cabbages make? *I'm* thinking of my sedan. If the rear axle's broken, Toto and Cheesi will die before we can get away from this wretched hole—won't you, my darlings?" Then, as though she had forgotten Natalie's existence, she turned and, lavishing extravagant endearments on the two whining, squirming bits of dog-flesh, entered her room.

The girl relieved her feelings by a vigorous stamp of the foot. What could Jones, a fifteen-dollar-a-week clerk, have in common with this insolent creature tricked out in clothes that suggested Bond Street and the Rue de la Paix? All the way to her aunt's room the question persisted: What in common—what in common? The princess-woman was obviously a spendthrift, a waster of life, of love, of opportunity. Every one who came in contact with her must suffer—this man with his scarred soul more than the rest. Of a sudden, the protective instinct, the feeling that a mother has for an ailing child made her long to save him in spite of himself from the unknown fate toward which he was rushing.

By six o'clock the kitchen was, after a fashion, once more in working order. The first tinkle of the supper-bell brought a clamorous stampede. The guests, who had suffered all day with a none too Christian fortitude, had evidently come to an eleventh-hour conclusion that the only way to beat the game was to get as much fun out of it as they could. It was an hilarious meal. People who had never been considered even amusing before became screaming humorists over tough beef and underdone potatoes.

As one social barrier after another was swept away, Natalie slipped unconsciously into the current, and was presently arranging for a concert with as much zest as though she were plain Miss Smith, instead of Natalie Mallinson, great-great-granddaughter of the Tillinghast who had forfeited his estates in England in order to join a handful of rebels under a certain George Washington.

Unexpected talent having been unearthed in the persons of a reluctant tenor, two boys with jew's-harps and a young lady who had once played accompaniments for a sister of a woman who did Geraldine Farrar's hair, the concert was soon in full swing.

For more than an hour Natalie forgot everything in the thrill of being stage-manager, but a sudden pang of remembrance brought a vision of Miss Merilda in her self-enforced isolation, and an opportune intermission coming just at that moment, she slipped away to see how the dear old nuisance was getting on.

In the hall she almost tripped over Sammy Todd, in his coarse, mud-caked boots and rain-soaked sweater, waiting for the basket in which he had delivered the butter and eggs. So intent was he on something or somebody that he never even looked up. Natalie turned and, following the direction of his gaze, saw the princess-woman, a striking figure against the mellow gray wall—her supple, uncorseted body tightly wrapped in a scarlet mandarin coat, heavy with Oriental embroideries—a cigarette dangling from the hand across the back of the chair. Her knees were crossed, exposing a full length of shapely black-silk legs. At leisurely intervals she lifted the cigarette and drew upon it with slow, indolent enjoyment. It was evident, from the bored half-smile about her lips, that she looked upon the assembled company with the same tolerance a park policeman has for the inmates of the zoo. To Natalie, it was a direct challenge. She forgot that yesterday this woman's creed would have been *her* creed, and remembered only that the struggling performers were at a disadvantage—that they were trying to do their best. A strange new feeling of brotherhood with the world was knocking at her heart. Sammy Todd, crowding close, was no longer a thing to laugh at, fly from. Life had brought him so little—required so much. He— Something about the crouching form disturbed her.

"Never seen a woman smoke before, Sammy?" she asked.

He sighed.

"Yep—granny—heaps of times—a pipe." It was a reluctant recall from his own thoughts. "That's not what I was a seein'. It's them things." His hand made an expressive gesture.

"Them things" were pear-shaped rubies hanging from hoops of diamonds in ears cunningly hidden by smooth black hair. The light from the fire woke a thousand reflections in their crimson depths. Live coals they might have been or—drops of blood. Only an ignorant woman or a daring one would have attempted them. The princess-woman, Natalie decided, as she turned away, was not ignorant.

Miss Merilda's room was dark; and, after speaking twice, the girl concluded that her aunt had gone to sleep in spite of the music. Relieved, she tiptoed softly out.

The boy, Sammy Todd—what a lust of possession there had been in his naive appreciation of the gaudy earrings! The miserable little figure haunted her. And all those other figures that walked the streets of the world, no better clothed, no better dressed, while the princess-woman and her tribe went as overweighted with riches as a Christmas tree—what of them? Of course, *that* was why there was lying and cheating and stealing going on all the time—even murder. She had a sudden urge to audit the balance-sheet and, slipping into her room, tucked a five-dollar bill into her belt.

But Sammy Todd had gone.

NATALIE'S reappearance in the living-room was greeted with demands for arbitration in an argument as to the relative merits of Wagner and Irving Berlin.

After a few pointed remarks by a stout old gentleman who kept insisting that in his day Wagner had always batted over three hundred, the concert was resumed where it had left off. But the enthusiasm was gone. The best efforts fell flat. Some one had just suggested a Paul Jones to close the evening when there was the sound of a chair hastily overturned—a woman's voice rising in terror. Instantly every one was on his feet.

"Who screamed?" "What *is* it?" One by one, as though drawn by a magnet, they turned to find the answer in the scarlet figure flattened against the opposite wall. Like the mask of a milliner's manikin, the face of the princess-woman stared, a ghastly oval in its frame of inky hair.

"At the window!" she whispered.

There was a dash for the door. The men all tried to reach the porch at the same time —a resulting jam—then the cry:

"We've got him!" And the two jew's-harp performers staggered into the room dragging between them a small, disheveled figure.

"Why, that's only John, Bill's brother! He wouldn't hurt a fly." By this time Miss Pringle had reached the scene. "What were you doing out there on the porch in all this wet?"

John lifted his head slowly, reluctantly. It was evident that he was ill—very ill.

"I ain't done nothin'," he whimpered. "I want Bill. Where is he?"

"Boy, look at me!" The princess-woman advanced, wrapping her coat still more tightly about her. "Was there anybody else beside yourself out there on the porch?"

John shifted his weight from one foot to the other. A sudden spasm of hatred—the hatred that a weakling feels for strength and vitality—convulsed his features.

"How should I know?" he said. "I only just come."

At Miss Pringle's suggestion, another search of the porch; then, with some snickering and a none too low-toned aside from the old gentleman about hysterical women, the party scattered for the night.

The bedrooms were cold; the linen was damp.

FOR the first time in her healthy, well-ordered existence, Natalie had a case of mental indigestion. Sleep declined to come at her bidding. The noise of the storm and a thousand memories of the day kept her brain active. A patch of light—the transom over her door—became a canvas on which a panorama of scenes and people moved in steady procession—Miss Pringle, in her sly, cringing postures; Sammy Todd, loose-lipped, staring; Bill, sullen, impudent; the princess-woman with the disdainful mouth; the face of John stamped by the seal of death. They were all there; but the one that troubled her the most was Jones, the savage. Would he tame under life's tutelage, or would he break? Worn out at last, she buried her face in the pillows and put the world away from her. How long she slept she could not guess, but she woke with a consciousness that something had happened. The wind still howled. Somewhere a shutter had come unfastened and banged with annoying regularity. The branch of a tree tapped a tattoo on her window-pane.

And then she realized— She was in total darkness. The light over her door had been extinguished.

Her resentment against the inefficiency which would permit of a hall light going out in a public house grew and grew. Suppose there should be a fire—how was any one to find the way to the stairs? She turned and twisted until the bed became a heap of thorns to her body. At last, deciding to see to the thing herself, she flung on a bathrobe, lighted her bedroom candle and shuffled into the hall. The lamp in its bracket was only a few feet away from her door, and, shielding the flame of her candle from the draft, she edged along until she had reached it. To her annoyance, she found there was no oil in the container.

She considered the ethics of rousing Miss Pringle; but that lady, like a mole, always burrowed unobtrusively for her night's rest—no one knew whither. There was the candle, of course, as long as it would last, or, better still, the bathroom lamp at the end of the hall. That was burning. She could see it through the half-opened door, but——

A fluttering moment of hesitation. Without knowing just why, she was certain there was some one in the bathroom, just beyond her line of vision. With soft, small steps she crept forward.

There, fully dressed, a crumpled towel in one hand and a handkerchief in the other, stood Jones. On both towel and handkerchief were stains—slowly spreading stains of red.

At the sound of her gasp, he came to the right-about.

For a moment they stood facing each other. Then,

"That's nothing," he said. "I—I was shaving—and cut myself."

Natalie turned and fled into her room and under the covers of the bed. After a stifling interval she sat up again and reached for a match. By the tiny blue flame she consulted her watch.

Ten minutes to three! Why should the clerk of the One Pine Inn shave himself at ten minutes to three?

A persistent sunbeam traveled along Natalie's arm and paused to play on her upturned face. Lingeringly she woke, yawned, saw the dancing reflection on the ceiling. The storm was over, and a sense of relaxation enfolded her. It would now be possible for them to leave the One Pine Inn. In all this sunshine Miss Merilda's obsession would wither like the proverbial green bay tree. She could not——

A constant tap, tap forced itself into her consciousness.

A group of people were gathered below on the lawn—Miss Pringle, Tillie, three of the waitresses, a few of the guests—all talking in low-pitched, agitated tones.

To the left, in a fringe of white birch, Bill, a small cleaver in one hand, was chipping at a pile of rock and cement—the dam built to hold back sufficient water from the winding brook for Miss Pringle's many improvised fountains. After each succession of blows he added a little foot-power until the wall, creaking a protest, swayed and toppled.

"Get out of the way!" he yelled. "It's comin' now!"

As the water boiled out of the crevice and over the lawn, the group broke apart, and Natalie saw what they had been looking at—the bird-bath. At one end, the nasturtiums had been trampled into a pulpy mass of withered bloom, the hollyhocks broken off or torn up by the roots. A smeary splotch of color filled the old horse-trough from end to end. With a growing horror she saw black tendrils of hair, unloosed and floating among the lily-pads, an arm that trailed limply over the side, the fingers of one hand that rested on the grass.

While she watched, the water settled, oozed away, and the white arm, with jerky movements like those of a marionette, flopped over as the hideous "something" in the bird-bath sank out of sight.

She almost cried aloud as she realized that it was the body of the princess-woman, still wrapped in her scarlet mandarin coat.

The thrills in this instalment give some indication of what is to come. This great mystery story is continued in September EVERYBODY'S—out August 15th.

The Only Things

By Carol Haynes

BELOVÈD, though our lives are checkered o'er
With fitful glooms and gleams,
I think the only things worth living for
Are memories and dreams.
We touch the close-curled bud before the bloom,
With tender finger-tips,
And kiss the crumpled petals in the bloom
With reverent, trembling lips.

Remember this forever—that we keep
Closest to heaven when
We leave this little world to smile or weep.
It shall not matter then
What days of pain or hours of rapture roll
Upon us through the years.
Dreams are the smiles, belovèd, of the soul,
And memories are the tears.

Dolly *of* Logan Square

The Author of This Very Human Bit of Drama Has Adopted an Unusual Method for Fiction. He Makes One Word Do the Work of Ten, and More Effectively. It Was He Who Wrote "Shagan"

By James Oppenheim

Illustration by Lawrence Herndon

DOLLY lived on Logan Square. It is in Chicago. I thought of writing a novel and calling it "Dolly of Logan Square." But there are reasons why her life makes a story. You shall see.

She was the Dolly to whom the popular song was written: "Good-by, Dolly Grey." You remember the song. Everybody whistled it. And then forgot it. It is the way with such songs. It was the way with Dolly. At one time every one in Chicago's Loop knew her. She was seen in all the cafés, restaurants, theatres and at all the balls and chowders and blow-outs. A party without Dolly was unthinkable. She came in with a Sarah Bernhardt entry and set the place aroar. Wherever she went there was excitement. She carried a revolver, but never used it. It was handy for any man who dared to go beyond the limit with her. Whereupon she took it out of her purse, and he cooled off.

Dolly was employed by the great American Implement Company as private secretary to John Skatow, the general manager. He found her indispensable. If she was away, the business came to a standstill. Or almost. She alone could tell him how to run his affairs. And did. This is the way she did it:

"John"—her eyes snapped fire and her fingers snapped in his face—"are you a man? The devil you are, letting the Harvester people put it over you with their snarled 'G.' What's a snarled 'G,' anyway? Nothing. We have the patented 'Q' twist. It means the farmer goes to bed with the guinea-hens instead of staying up with the night-owls. Get me? Fire a letter into Quentin, Howe & Bossard that will make the hair between their eyebrows singe to a minute. This business is ours, and we'll padlock it for keeps."

You know the talk. It is American. I could listen to Dolly chatter for solid hours. She never stopped, except when Sadowitz slapped her. Then she stopped, and her story began.

Skatow, mindful of profits and prestige, doubled and redoubled her salary to keep her. The Harvester people, the biggest in Chicago, knew her. The Swift and Armour people knew her. They were all after her. Skatow gave her an automobile, not in the way that many men of money give their employees furs, diamonds and cars but in exactly the way that he bought her a new typewriting machine. He had to keep her.

"Come in when you want to," he told her. And she did. Sometimes it was noon. Sometimes it was nine. When it was nine, Skatow jumped like a boy caught stealing apples. Dolly always thought him a little slow. He had a habit of opening an envelope by slitting it under the flap, taking out the letter and then searching the empty envelope three times, after holding it up to the light to see if he had missed anything. Dolly couldn't stand it. He would stare at her while she shoveled the mail off his desk onto her own, which stood beside him. Then she went through it like a Texas cyclone, and the white paper kept dropping down before him with crisp advice. "Here; say this. Say that. Here's a whopper. Cut him down. Cross him out." And so on. She was a real secretary. The rest are only typists.

Well, when she was at the height of her power, she met Sadowitz. It was this way: Dolly always had a dozen lovers about her. They whistled her down the roads in their racers; they snorted her over the lake in their private yachts; they week-ended her over in Michigan or Indiana. She remained unmoved, and always had the last word.

"Marry you? Say, Gus; what are you giving me? I can run the American Implement Company, but I never pretended to be able to manage a kindergarten. Find a mother, Gus, and then we'll be friends."

She meant it. There was Floyd Hannigan, the salt-fish man. He did a fine wholesale business. He was big, shining, regular, good-natured. He protected women. He would have laid down his life for Dolly. He got her out of danger the time she spent two months tracking down an embezzler for Skatow, and, after a wild chase, ended up at Niagara Falls in a nest of criminals who began tracking her. She lost her nerve for the first time in her life and telegraphed Hannigan. He came down with automatic pistols and took her and the embezzler back to Chicago. That quick-money man is in the pen now, and threatens to shoot Dolly when he gets out. But he won't shoot her. You shall see.

Hannigan, by all the rules of the game, should have landed Dolly. But he didn't. She laughed at him.

"I make you happy now, don't I?"

"Yes," he admitted.

"Stay happy; don't marry me."

Then she patted his head and called him a "cute child." It only made them better comrades than ever.

THERE were men who misunderstood Dolly. When Skatow first saw her, he thought that a queen of burlesque had invaded the sacred quiet of the implement company. She dressed up, and improved on the Paris styles, Chicago fashion. That means a touch of color. And several touches. They were in her cheeks, which she turned to a bright red. She penciled her eyebrows and eyelashes. She rouged her lips. She powdered. She looked almost out of sight, she was so hidden in colors. Then her hair was frizzly, a bright yellow, and her nose turned up at the end and made a curve like a scythe, and her eyes were a blue you could look into like water, and her figure was perfect. The high heels, the lace-work stockings, the gaudy dress, the high-colored face and the frizzly hair deceived many men. It deceived Lon Sheeley, to his sorrow. She told him frankly, over a table and a bottle of champagne at Castaway's:

"I would fall like any woman, if it was special. Romantic, Lon. Fix up a boudoir effect, very rich. Studio stuff. Oriental hangings. Turn down the lights in violet globes. Burn incense. Put us there alone at one in the morning. Have a low couch. And soft music. And cigarettes. And dreams. And nothing could hold me. Only, dear boy, you'd have to get up early and hire a moving-van to get me over to the property. And when you called, I'd be out. Go home, Lon. And take home a bunch of forget-me-nots for your mother."

Lon went. He looked like a spanked boy.

Dolly met Sadowitz at an ordinary cabaret. He was a Polish Jew, born with a piano at the tips of his fingers. He had never studied music, for his father was a pedler who fled Poland and came to America. Peddling is not an American business, and old Sadowitz didn't thrive at it. Sadowitz was brought up on the East Side of Los Angeles and never got over it. He went into vaudeville when he was fifteen, starting at Raumann's new theatre on Grand Avenue, Los Angeles. Then he drifted about, half starving, until Chicago took him to her bosom. They liked him there. He wasn't much on looks. He was ugly, in the Jewish way—a hooked nose, a greasy complexion, and comical hair, all thick curls of crisp black. He was little and round-shouldered and thin-chested. And he played like a god.

He played, did Sadowitz. He played popular music; he played classical music; he made up music of his own. His fingers couldn't stop. They ran in pairs, triplets, and eight- and tenlets up and down the white-and-black boulevard, and wherever their pattering heels touched ground, the music gushed. It was exactly like touching Texas soil with a pile-driver. Up comes a gusher of oil.

Sadowitz knew he could play, and was proud. But he didn't get along. He didn't care. He was like his father, who could easily in ten years have owned and run the biggest department store in Los Angeles, but preferred the long roads, the slow walk, the never-ending dream of peddlery. Here was a new country, and there a horizon never crossed before. Here was a house. Who was in it? Perhaps a beautiful old woman. Perhaps a strange, sullen man, who would house you as if he intended to rob you in the night, but who would sit before the fire and tell you his life-story before you went to bed. Everlasting romance of the road! Always new! Always one mystery after another opening up!

It was so with Sadowitz. He loafed from city to city. He loved the lights, the gaiety of cafés and cheap theatres. He loved the people. He played for them. They loved him.

Nothing fed him more than the thunder of applause when he finished a piece. Then he stood up, bowing right and left, and smiled. It was a radiant smile. It said, "Beautiful people!"

WHEN Dolly heard him at Castaway's, she fell in love with him. Madly in love with him. She was sitting at a table over in a corner with Floyd Hannigan. She sent Floyd to fetch Sadowitz. Sadowitz came over to her. She leaned forward and looked up at him, her blue eyes moist and radiant, her soft lips parted, and she took his hand in her's and said to him:

"You are a marvel. I love you."

Sadowitz stood staring at her. What in the world did she mean? She said it as easily as if she had been ordering a chop. But she held his hand and went on holding it.

"Music is my soul," said Dolly. "I love it. And if it weren't for music, this howling Chicago would be a desert in the wilderness. I couldn't stand it without music. Music keeps me alive. Now you know it. Play something for me. For me alone. Make it up. Play it for Dolly."

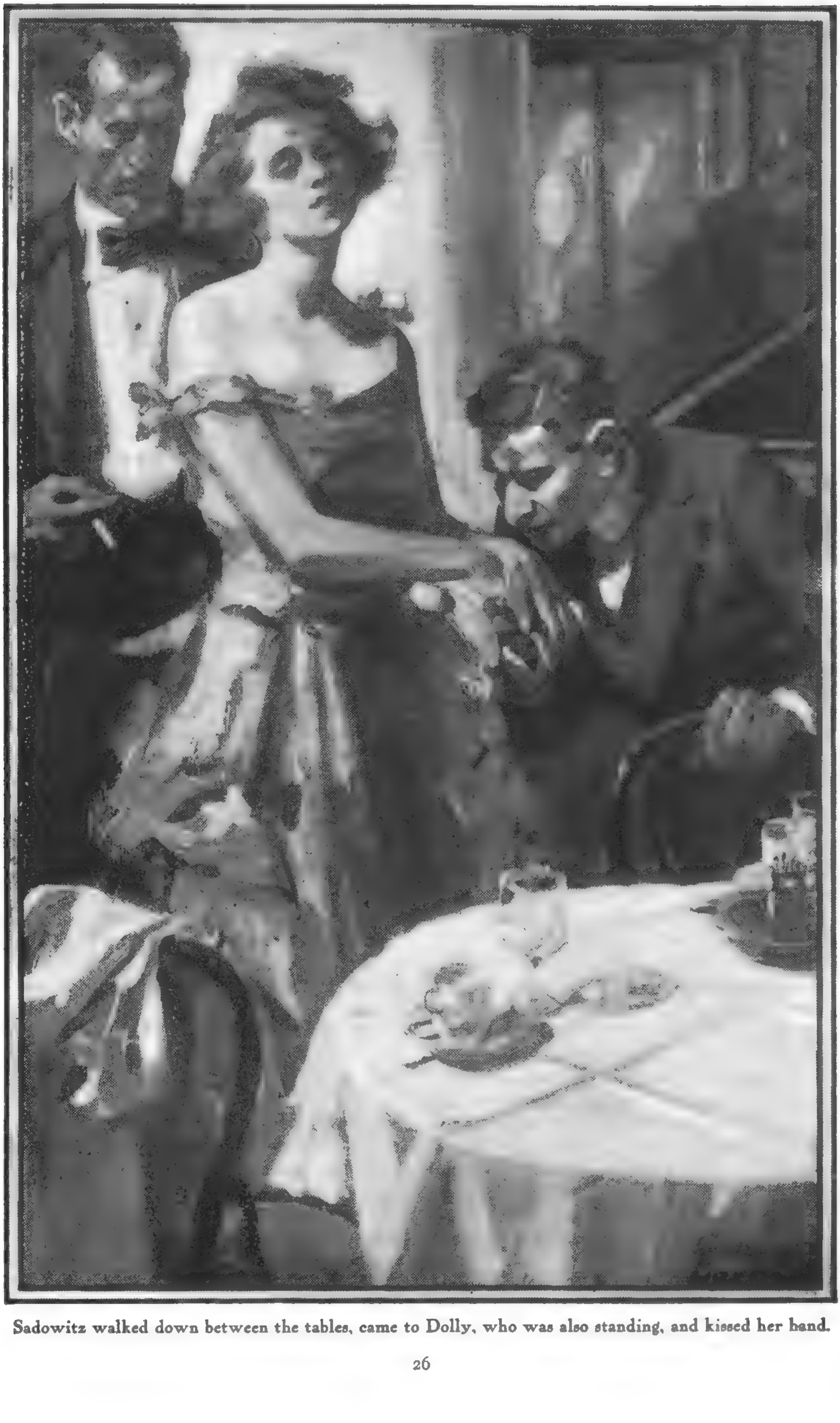
He did. No one could withstand her. He trembled as he went back to the piano. Did he love her? No; Sadowitz was like many other artists. He loved an image, an image of perfection, an image of divine woman who hovered over him and sometimes threatened to put on flesh and be Miss or Mrs. So-and-so, but never succeeded in winning him. But Dolly was different. Her directness bowled you off your feet. Her nonchalance in saying the most outrageous things quite stunned you. Sadowitz was stunned. He said to himself,

"My God, I have met *the* woman!"

This he had said before. But he played as if it were so. He played, did Sadowitz. Everybody noticed it. It was beautiful and deep. At the end, everybody stood up and there was silence. Sadowitz walked down between the tables, came to Dolly, who was also standing, and kissed her hand. Then he turned to the people and smiled. They understood. They broke into a thunder of applause.

She had him up to see her at Logan Square. Logan Square isn't much. Dolly's father was a foreman in one of the big slaughter-houses and had to live accordingly. The square is a bunch of dusty trees and dead grass and some dirt-spots worn hard by the boys and girls; and about this park are four rows of tarnished and peeled frame houses. Dolly lived in one of them with her father and mother. That was Dolly. Her parents lived that way. She loved her parents; she didn't care. What if she had an automobile and the best woman's job on the lot and was a star in the cafés and a millionaire's son offered her his hand? What of it? "I am Dolly," she seemed to say. "I do things my own way—the natural way. Here are my parents. Here am I."

Besides, she loved the quiet of the square and the back yard behind her father's house. It was fenced in and overrun with a tangle of weeds and briers and bushes, and a tall oak tree to shade it all. Under the oak was a bench, and you could sit there at night and see the moon or the stars or the heavy clouds glowing with the city lights. She loved the place. It quieted her. It soothed her. She needed it. She could get away from everything, drop her excitement and meditate. Then she sat, perfectly still, and felt religious. She felt the mystery of her existence, and wondered what the stars were and why the universe was so big. She wondered why she had been born, and why she was alive and where she was going. She thought of death. It quieted her. She was



Sadowitz walked down between the tables, came to Dolly, who was also standing, and kissed her hand.

soothed by the greatest thought that man knows. And she was not frightened. She loved the thought of another life beyond this one.

Dolly took Sadowitz out to the back yard. There was a moon that night, a blotchy one swelling over the housetops and riding free to roll into a radiant silver disk. The wind was in the tangle, and it was soft. It was a summer night, and one could almost feel the tide running in on Lake Michigan, and the ripple of the waters. All the rest was still.

They sat on the bench and talked. They included the moon in their talk, and many cities and the madness of music. They included their two past lives. They got on together. She loved him, and knew it.

Then something happened. Dolly had decided to take him in hand. What nonsense! Here he was, with positive genius, and hardly making enough to keep him in shoes. Why, this young man could be a head-liner in the circuit and pull in his hundreds, maybe his thousands, a week. Dolly knew her business. She hadn't been running the American Implement Company for nothing. She would run Sadowitz; she would be his impresario; she would put him on the map.

She did. And lost him. The circuit touched St. Louis, and he went thither. All the way down he sent her telegrams from every way station; and when he got there he sent her a double night-letter, a bunch of flowers ordered from a Chicago florist, and these words: "I kiss your handkerchief."

It was not a strawberry-decorated handkerchief like the famous little mop that got Desdemona murdered by her lover, Othello, but it did nearly as much mischief. He gave it to a dark, heavy woman by the name of Selba Talmadge, who did an act on the same stage. And Selba used the handkerchief in her act and everybody said, "What a strange handkerchief!" They might well say it. It was a cubistic piece of silk, the pattern of which was so startling that you could see it from the gallery when Selba spread it out on her dresser. She always spread it out carefully. That was the trouble.

DOLLY saw it when Selba and Sadowitz came to Chicago. They had their acts on the same stage, first Selba, then Sadowitz. Dolly might not have noticed the handkerchief if Sadowitz hadn't told her that he had lost it. That was bad enough in a lover. This was heart-breaking.

She went right through the stage-door behind the scenes as soon as Selba got through with her act. And she found the two in each other's arms. This was a new experience for Dolly. She was wildly jealous. She went up and stood before the stupefied pair and said to Sadowitz,

"You're nothing but a dirty Jew!"

Then Sadowitz slapped her. She reeled back, stared at him and walked away, suddenly quiet. Her soul was lost. She loved Sadowitz in a way that was new to her, in the way women love when they go before the judge and swear that their drunken, wife-beating husbands are mild and good and loving. She loved in the way the woman loves who goes down into the mud for her lover. He had slapped her. He owned her from that moment on.

Dolly had been on top all her life. Everybody obeyed her. She had things her own way. She queened it over all. She thought herself superior to others. She felt that she had condescended when she stooped to loving a Jew. For what are the Jews? The scum of the earth, thought Dolly. And here a Jew had not only insulted and degraded her by giving her handkerchief to a common woman and kissing her before Dolly's eyes; he had actually turned on her and slapped her in the face, so that the cheek turned first white and then crimson. He had struck her down; she was his.

Such are the Dollies. They are looking for a man all the time who will conquer them. When they are conquered, they are broken. That wild, untamable spirit submits to the harness, and gentleness succeeds. We shall see.

She went home and wept all night. She resolved to see him and tell him what he had done. She did see him. But to see him she had to write a letter. And then another. And then a third, in which she apologized for her remark. And then she saw him.

He came to the house, and they both wept in each other's arms out under the oak in the back yard. The moon was veiled that night, as well it might be. Let us hurry on.

He promised to be true to her. He said she had made him. He promised everything. So did she. They became engaged, and soon they would marry.

It never happened. She could not hold him. She even followed him on his circuit. She sewed for him and bought him clothes and took him out riding. She mothered him, and he needed a mother. Nothing succeeded. Skatow found her absences increasing, her work going down-hill. It seemed as if her day was beginning to wane.

Then she went to Europe. Her doctor, Skatow and her friends all ordered it. So she went. She took Myra Hansum with her, an old school-friend. They visited Paris, Berlin and London, and escaped the great war by one day. They were on the *Mauretania* as it fled from some phantom of German war-ships and scooted its way to Halifax instead of New York. I was on that steamer and met Dolly. She told me of Sadowitz, the tears openly running down her face and streaking the laid-on colors.

There was no help for it. Dolly's spirit was broken.

Then she met Danny Presser. He was only a boy, though he looked a man. He was seven years younger than Dolly, but he was tall, well built, smooth-shaven, a handsome young American. He carried himself with an air, spoke little, and was a judge of women. His father was a big real-estate man in New York, divorced from the mother. She had married a scamp out on Long Island, and had wild parties, exciting motor-trips, road-house celebrations, and was drunk a good part of the time. She loved Danny, idolized him, petted him, indulged him, showered him with money, tempted him to overdrink. In short, she tried to ruin him. But he was sturdy and had something in him. Dolly saw it.

She had a passion for saving men. She had always saved men. She resolved to save Danny from the clutches of his mother. So he fell in love with her. And said nothing.

When they got to New York, by Pullman from Halifax, she went on to Chicago; he stayed behind to see his father. His father advised him to marry and settle down. That was the only way out. If he kept on bumming round, his mother would ruin him. But the right sort of girl would make him work. He accepted the advice. He telegraphed Dolly, "I am coming to get you."

That was Danny.

Dolly understood the telegram and didn't know whether to meet him or not. But when the train drew in, she was there on the station platform. He took her by the arm and led her out. On the way he said:

"I must leave for New York in twenty-four hours, and you with me. My father will meet us and witness the marriage."

Dolly pleaded with him. You see, her spirit was broken. The old Dolly was gone. Here was a man who demanded, a man who knew his own mind, a man determined on ruling her. She pleaded in a little quiet restaurant all night. He kept on lighting cigars and looking at her. Now and then he said:

"To-morrow, Dolly, you go with me. I won't take 'No.' You're mine."

She went with him to New York the following evening. They are married and live in Brooklyn. Danny is in the automobile business. Dolly cooks his suppers for him and mends his socks. That is all.

The Real Boy in Fiction

IT ISN'T often that a real boy appears in fiction. In September EVERYBODY'S—out August 15th—there will be two of them—just regular kids, the kind every small-town man knows, and the kind every real man would like to have been. They are presented in a story called "Gee! Let's Go!" by Henry Francis Granger—the first of a series of "Little Journeys Back Home." They're fine boy-stories for boys and girls of anywhere from twenty to a hundred.

The August Novelette—A Story of the West

Is Luck *a* Lady?

We Have a Way of Laughing, Sneering at People Because They're Different. So Both Sides Started Wrong When Henry Adams' Son First Entered the Cow-Country. And What Followed Is the Offering with Which a New Author Makes His Début in Everybody's

By Harry Sinclair Drago

Illustration by George W. Gage

IT IS a good fifty miles across the flats from Winnemucca Mountain to the Bull's Head. Two men, or rather a boy and a man, made the trip this day. The buckboard in which they were seated swayed crazily from side to side as their team jogged along, sending up clouds of dust that settled upon men and beasts. Neither of the two weary travelers had spoken in hours.

Far to the north, the Santa Rosa Hills began to rear up. The color and the bigness of the country wakened strange emotions in the boy. He was a newcomer to this desert land, but already it had caught at something vital in him. His ego had subsided in a marked degree since noontime. He stirred restlessly on his end of the seat.

"Why did they laugh back there?" he asked, a far-away look in his eyes. "My clothes, wasn't it?"

"Maybe," the man answered. He knew the boy referred to his reception at the railroad station. From the safety of the waiting-room a score of buckaroos and rangemen had witnessed his arrival, and taken much delight therefrom.

Winnemucca had known for a week that young Mr. Adams was coming to spend the summer at the Bull's Head, the headquarters ranch of the Double A outfit. And Cuthbert was no ordinary tenderfoot His father, old Henry, had amassed a fortune on the range by his accuracy—sometimes with a gun—and his utter lack of anything even remotely resembling a conscience. But in one of those rare "weak moments" of his, he had been led to the altar, and the lady of his choice, having heard him referred to as one of the "bovine aristocracy," had promptly put the very, very soft pedal on anything pertaining to cows or Nevada. Hence, much to old Henry's disgust, his son had never set foot in the cow-country until this day.

The unhappy Melody, whom Cash, the Double A foreman, had sent in to meet their guest, grunted as he recalled Cuthbert's answer to the snicker that had greeted him. "Cheap amusement for cheap people," the boy had flung at the grinning crowd.

Cuthbert had already kicked himself a dozen times for having given vent to such a tenderfoot show of feeling. He did not know that his mother had put the collective nose of the cow-country out of joint by her aloofness or that old Henry had never spared the prod in his many years on the range. Those case-hardened men had gathered at the station hoping to find in

Cuthbert the rent in the Adams armor. And it was now their unanimous opinion that they had succeeded.

IF IN New Haven, where he had spent the last year, any one had been so rash as to dub him a "tenderfoot," Cuthbert would have gone hostile immediately. The boy was proud of the West, and although he knew nothing of the range, he thrilled to its traditions. Bovine aristocrat or not, Cuthbert spread the greatness of his parent to whoever would listen. To a certainty, the boy was not a snob. And he would have gone to no end of trouble to have avoided being dubbed a tenderfoot in his father's country. But it is doubtful if anything he could have done would have altered their opinion of him. Cuthbert's heart was all right, but nature had given him a face and figure so long associated with the popular idea of callow youth fresh from the effete East or other centers of easy money that it marked him as though it were a label.

"What was it the big man said?" the boy asked.

Melody answered, without turning his head,

"Said 'you may be the world to your mother, but you'll always be Cuthbert to me.' "

Cuthbert smiled mirthlessly. His vanity had been hurt. Conversation languished for a while. Melody, who never said what he thought and who could be as self-contained as an Indian at times, was sorely puzzled. He had expected to be reduced to a condition bordering on coma by the time they began climbing the bench-lands above the river; but the expected questions had not been asked.

"You don't talk much, do you?" he drawled as he flecked the flies from old Belle's scarred leg.

"Talk's cheap."

Melody glanced at him shrewdly. The boy's answer was almost a rebuke. It was better than one expected from a tenderfoot.

"The only thing about this country that ain't cheap," he murmured, "is experience."

Another pause followed this bit of logic. Cuthbert felt the slap in the cowboy's words, but he held his tongue. In fact, he had done nothing else since arriving, save for that one rank outburst. He hadn't pried into Melody's past, or asked the questions that all young things are certain to ask. He glanced at his dust-covered tweeds. They had been quite ordinary on the train, but their smartness damned them now. Were they going to judge him by his clothes? He knew he didn't appear half as ridiculous as the man beside him would seem if he were suddenly whisked away to the land Cuthbert had just quitted. He would be a curiosity, a human being associated with circuses and Wild-West shows. This picture stilled Cuthbert's rankling heart. In comparison, his reception had been mild.

But no one was going to laugh him out of this country. It was the story-book land of his boyhood—the place where his father had worn deadly weapons and made his mark. He drank in the warm wind which came to him fresh from desert leagues, pungent with the fragrance of sage-brush. The snow patches which still lingered far above the high pastures on the slopes of the distant Tuscaroras caught and held his eyes. Cuthbert shook his head and sighed.

"I—guess you think I don't belong here," he said almost pathetically. "I'd like to—to belong here."

Melody turned sharply. The boy was staring off into space, enraptured, his eyes pensive. The cowboy cocked his head as if he doubted his senses. He turned away with his habitual grunt, but the pucker did not leave his forehead. Truly, Melody was having a most miserable time. He had hoped to have much choice talk to relate to Boots, Chet, old Brother Jones and the others that evening when they had retired to the second floor of the bald-faced stone house which was the Bull's Head. Therefore with genuine relief he sent his team into the ranch-yard. Cash met them. Something in Melody's air told the gaunt foreman that all was not as they had expected. The boy did not catch the glances they exchanged.

Many things could have escaped Cuthbert at that moment, so enraptured was he.

It was as though the favorite book of his childhood had come to life. The house itself was as he had pictured it. Even the old poplar from whose limbs the lifeless body of Scotty Sefrancis had once dangled was in its appointed place. Cuthbert glanced about for a sight of Brother Jones, the lawless old person who had ridden for the Double A since the days of the free range. Maybe you can understand what was in Cuthbert's heart.

He had come into his own—face to face with the thing he had been dreaming of for fifteen years or more. No wonder that he tossed nervously that night. And there were other spirits in the rooms above him equally on edge. To a man they dreaded his coming as though he were a plague.

"Is he as bad as we aixpected?" Boots drawled.

"He's worse," Melody growled. "Got ideas of his own."

"He'd be bound to with a name like that. I knew a man onct, down in Fort Worth, gave that name to a mule. Just ruined him."

"He'll be wantin' to ride and to walk," Brother Jones added mournfully. "I know his kind. He'll get hurt, and he'll get lost. God, I'll bet he'll think we're quaint—an'—an' picturesque!"

CUTHBERT was up early, and his appearance put a stop to the work in hand. Conversation ceased at his approach. The boy sensed the antagonism, but if they expected it to rub the smile from his face, they were disappointed. Two such days passed, but Mr. Adams pretended not to notice, and the boys were at a loss to decide whether he was having a pleasant or miserable time.

Cordovan puttees and riding-breeches of an accentuated fulness about the hips became his daily attire. Cash, mindful of the time when old Henry should arrive, took care to see that those strange togs never got astride a real horse. But, whatever his faults, Cuthbert was young, and he soon tired of being chaperoned. Little Mac, the Double A blacksmith, was the first to feel the change in Mr. Adams, junior.

The forge was housed in a small building of its own, abutting the big barn. There, during the long, hot afternoons, Cuthbert would loiter, cautiously relieving his bump of curiosity. Whatever he took away from these afternoons with the untalkative MacGregor was more or less of a mystery to the canny Scot; but it bore fruit on the fourth day.

It was early morning. The wranglers were in the corral cutting out the horses for the day's work when they saw a strange object approaching them. It was Cuthbert, garbed in an old pair of pants and a woolen shirt. He had found a wind-whipped sombrero and appropriated it.

The boys rubbed their eyes for a second look. What had happened to their strange pet? Cuthbert did not keep them waiting long. He saw little Chet in the center of the corral, rope in hand.

"Say, Chet," he called; "I want a *horse* to-day—one with four legs!"

It was the first time he had addressed any of them so familiarly. Old Henry's son was out to show them that he was not a snob. He had even dispensed with his glasses, which was a neck-breaking concession to their prejudice.

Chet gave him a mare named Lillian Russell. In the vernacular of the range, she had been a "high-flier" in her prime, and even now, though starched a little in the front legs, could hold her own with most of the younger horses.

Cuthbert rode away, all serene. Horse-wrangling as an occupation ceased until he was out of sight. The consternation he left behind him would have been ample pay, had he known of it, for all their whispering and snubbing of him.

Chet appealed to Melody at breakfast an hour later, but that sorely perplexed gentleman had no explanation to offer.

"It's just the second stage of his disease, I guess" he growled. "Like as not he'll be wearin' chaps by to-morrow."

They were preparing to leave for the North Fork when Lillian Russell cantered into the yard. She was riderless. Melody was the first to see her.

"Gosh!" he grinned. "Somethin's happened to Cuthbert."

And, indeed, something had. He had ridden along the river as far as the Dry Shoshone before attempting to ford it. The old cow-horse hadn't fancied the quicksands there, and when Cuthbert had applied persuasion in the form of ear-pulling, Lillian had promptly bucked him off and trotted home.

It was high noon before Cuthbert limped into the Bull's Head, his face torn from its unexpected contact with a buckthorn and his shirt in tatters; but there was a smile on his face. He had made it on his own, without help from any of them!

No man could have tried harder than Cuthbert did from then on to win the approval of those calloused men-at-arms who rode for the Double A. He tried his hand at every sort of odd job about the place, but his success was far from gratifying. For all of his clumsiness and lack of skill, his body hardened by the very nature of his endeavors. By the end of the week he knew how to sit in a saddle the way range-men do. His appetite had become enormous. In fact, Cuthbert was just running over with good health.

Those snow patches far up the sides of the Tuscaroras still attracted him. He became obsessed with the idea of climbing to them.

"They ain't no trail up there," Melody told him, "unless you go way round the range and come up from the other side."

"I won't need any trail," Cuthbert argued. "Can't I leave early in the morning and hike there before the sun gets high?"

Melody pulled his hair. He knew how far it was to those glistening white patches. Up-hill all the way, too! But this confiding idiot had it coming to him. Melody's eyes narrowed. Cuthbert wanted walking, eh? Well, he'd get it! Maybe he'd have sense enough to mind his own business after that.

THEY started the following morning at sunup. Cuthbert had breakfast for both of them in his haversack. Two hours later they forded the river, and he insisted on stopping to eat. Melody grudgingly consented to the halt.

They ate in silence. A half-hour later they were under way again. Melody made the pace, a long, free-swinging stride. Cuthbert began to perspire, but he did not ask for quarter.

The sun began to swing across the sky. Melody unbuttoned his shirt. He smiled to himself as he did so. He fancied he knew how Cuthbert was feeling.

Nine o'clock, ten o'clock—the morning wore on. Heat waves began to dance over the floor of the desert. The foot-hills seemed as far away as ever. Another hour, the cowboy told himself, and his affable young friend would be baying his retreat.

But the hour passed, and still Cuthbert kept up beside him. Melody's legs, all unused to walking from years in a saddle, began to bother him. His high-heeled boots chafed his heels. Soul-destroying blisters followed in quick sequence.

Nothing but his bull-headed resolution to make Cuthbert cry quits kept him going. In spite of himself, his pace slackened before the next hour passed. They were then some quarter of a mile from the entrance to Rock Creek Cañon. Melody determined to keep on until they reached it.

It is no exaggeration to say that he could have killed and quartered Cuthbert at that moment without disturbing his conscience whatsoever. He had not turned back to glance at the boy in over an hour. A stretch of level ground led up to the mouth of Rock Creek. Melody summoned all of his courage to his aid and broke into a last mad spurt, determined to make Cuthbert cry stop before it was too late. But they came to the mouth of the cañon without any word from the victim.

Melody dropped back until he walked beside him. His heart failed him for an instant. Cuthbert was whistling a waltz!

With a hopeless look in his eyes, Melody flung himself down beside the creek to drink.

"Well," he said sourly, when he had quenched his thirst, "ain't yuh had about enough? It'll take us three hours to get up there from here. If you want to, we'll turn back."

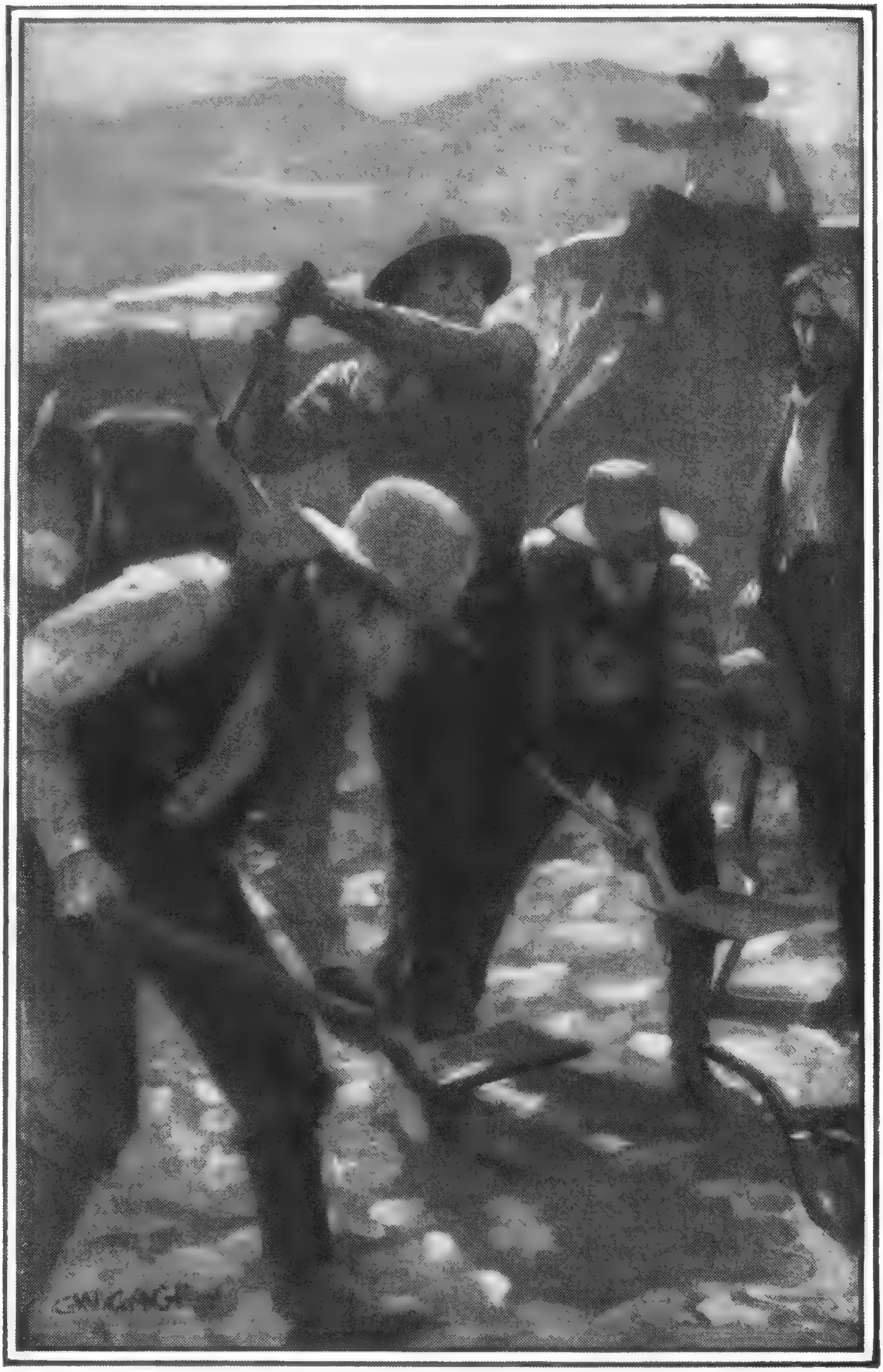
"Turn back now? Why, I'm fresh as a top! Suppose you wait here and let me go on alone."

"That's all right with me," Melody mumbled. "I don't want to keep you from enjoyin' yourself."

"Well, I'm just getting warmed up. I guess I've never told you, but I was the best Marathon man in the East this year."

It was a cruel blow. Two hours later, Melody began picking his way toward the north pasture; he had seen the hay wagon moving about over there. He had taken off his boots to ease his blistered heels, so his progress was of necessity slow. He hoped that he might never see Cuthbert again.

The eloquence of the red-haired one's reception when he at last returned to the Bull's Head was not calculated to make him change his mind. Melody knew that he would never live down this affair.



Young Mr. Adams developed into a worse taskmaster than his father ever had been. The men hated him with growing fervor.

The boy had no trouble in reaching the top. For an hour he had lain on the crest, paying devotion to the sun-gods and taking stock of life, seeing himself in true proportion to the greatness spread out before him. Such communion is good for any man, and Cuthbert started his long down-hill climb chastened and humble.

In a little draw, an hour or more on his way down, he was surprised to hear himself hailed.

"Howdy?"

It was Tim Silver, from Squaw Valley, looking for strays.

"Howdy?" the boy answered.

"I seem to disremember you," Tim said thoughtfully. "You jus' catch on with the Double A?"

"My God!" Cuthbert muttered to himself. He had never been so complimented in his life. The man actually took him for one of his father's hands! The boy lied as efficiently as Melody could have done.

"Yeh," he drawled, imitating the red-haired man; "I just drifted into this country a while back."

"Hear you got company," Tim smirked. "How is he?"

"He ain't no knock-out with the boys," Cuthbert answered, lighting one of Tim's cigarettes.

"He wouldn't be. I'll bet he's tryin' his damnedest to please, too. That's what I can't never forgive his kind. If they'd only try to throw the gaff into you once in a while, you'd have some respect for 'em."

Tim waved him good-by as the boy continued down to Rock Creek Cañon, where he supposed Melody to be waiting. But Cuthbert was in no hurry. That observation of Tim's had fallen on fertile soil.

Not finding Melody, he continued on to the ranch. It was nine that evening before he got in, exceedingly tired, but a new light in his eyes. He sent Cash up-stairs with a message for Melody.

"He says he went clean to the top," Cash explained. "Glad, he says, that you didn't wait for him. Took him longer'n he expected."

"Glad, eh?" Melody muttered sarcastically. "If he's glad, he ain't got no competition from me. He's got all the gladness there is round this place."

Three days passed, in which the cowboy racked his brain for a plan that would deliver Cuthbert into his hands.

"Yuh can't hurt or tire him out," he soliloquized, "but he's got pride. Yuh got to make a fool out of him. Ain't no man goin' to stick if he knows the whole country is laughin' at him."

He saw Cuthbert vault into his saddle in true range style and ride away.

"Ride, you grinnin', goggle-eyed dude! I bet I'll get you before I'm through."

CUTHBERT was off to spend the day at Eden. There had been a rich strike in the Eden Extension, and he was on edge to see it. Melody guessed his destination, and if his work had permitted, he, too, would have ridden there.

The boy was bubbling over with excitement when he returned. He had seen high grade for the first time, pockets of the pure quill. Melody and the others had gone up-stairs by the time he had eaten a cold supper; but he was so anxious to talk mining to some one that he decided to invade the sacred precincts of the second floor and let them make the best of it. Tim's philosophy was fermenting.

Melody was deep in the pages of a volume entitled "From the Ballroom to Hell" when Cuthbert found him. The boy settled himself on the end of the cowboy's bed. The red-haired one's eyes were wrathful.

"Melody," the other began eagerly, "they've got a fortune over at the old Eden mine. Handfuls of gold!"

The pages of "From the Ballroom to Hell" were of absorbing interest, but nothing to compare with this news.

"Yeh?" There was a note of regret, even sadness, in his voice. "Don't that beat hell? I could 'a' bought a half-interest in that mine onct for fifty dollars. Handfuls of gold! Hear that boys? Old Les's hit it rich!"

Boots and one or two others drew round them as the talk went on. Cuthbert took courage.

"I always said they was gold in the Santa Rosas," Melody declared. "Just draw a line between Tuscarora and National. Don't it hit Gold Circle? That was proof enough for me that all these ranges are mineralized. It shows what not havin' fifty dollars can do to a man."

"I'll bet there's lots of good things round here still," Cuthbert urged most naively.

"Surest thing!" Melody was emphatic. "Why, say; plenty chinks used to hand-placer these creeks in the old days."

"Yes; but you'd have to have some experience before you could go out and hope to find anything." Cuthbert was certainly improving.

"Yeh; that's right—but—er—well— No; I ain't so sure about that." Something in the boy's cock-sureness made him hedge. The first faint thrill of a great idea had seized Melody. "Say, you ain't interested in minin', be yuh?"

Cuthbert grinned.

"Oh, I don't know. Ought to be great sport, drifting round like that, looking for a fortune."

"I guess you got the bug all right."

This seemingly innocent remark carried a deadly barb. Cuthbert little guessed the adroitness behind it. He smiled guiltily.

"I—I guess I have. Might as well be all fool as half-fool. Cash tells me you used to prospect. I can't understand why you gave it up for the monotonous security of forty a month and cakes."

"You can't, eh? You don't know how hungry a man can git."

"But you must have found something you didn't want to leave without another try—something that's haunted you ever since." Melody nodded his head. "I was wondering if you'd like to tell me about it," the boy went on. "Time and a little money might make something of it."

Melody fought to repress his eagerness. The lamb had been delivered into his hands at last!

"Why, of course I might do that," he drawled. "I don't get no time any more to do anythin' that-a-way. I got a pet idea I been nursin' all along, just waitin' for a chance to run it down, but nothin's ever come of it. I wouldn't want to give it away, yuh understand."

"Certainly not! Fifty-fifty is good enough for me."

"Well, I'll think it over to-night."

"You do that," Cuthbert urged. "We'll talk it over again in the morning."

He started down-stairs to spend a restless night. As soon as he was gone, Melody became the target for a hundred questions.

"I'd tell yuh what I got on my mind if I didn't know you-all was nothin' but a bunch of human sieves. But you hear me! When I get done with that sweet young thing, he'll put on his store clothes and fan it out of here *muy pronto*."

CUTHBERT was on hand in the morning, and bit by bit drew from the reluctant Melody the information he sought.

"Mind yuh, I ain't sayin' you'll find anythin', but it's a chance. Yuh want to keep goin' right up the Dry Shoshone till yuh can't go no further. You'll find that country pretty well tossed up, ledges dippin' every which-a-way. Yuh can get color in a pan most anywhere in that basin. It's a good place to camp, too. How long yuh aimin' to stay out?"

"I won't come back until I need grub."

Cuthbert had never before used that inelegant, if democratic, word to designate something to eat. It was indicative of the change in him.

An hour later he got away. Charlie, the Chinese cook, had outfitted him, and Cash had supplied a pack-horse. Cuthbert rode Lillian Russell. It was a brave little turnout. The youthful prospector waved a careless hand to the men in the yard as he passed.

"He won't be so all-fired pleased with himself to-night, all alone in them God-awful hills with the coyotes yip-yippin' round him." Melody shook his head. "Plenty bob-cats up there, too. Yes, sir! Cuthbert's goin' to age rapid in the next two or three days."

"I bet he don't stick," Spike asserted.

"He'll stick all right," Melody argued. "You don't savvy that kid. He's out to show us he's regular. He'll sleep with a gun in each hand, but he won't come runnin' back."

That evening they shook with merriment as they contemplated young Mr. Adams' misery. He was cold and lonesome and frightened, and they were very glad of it.

It may seem strange to you that grown men could find so much pleasure in the misery of another, but remember that he was a rich man's son, one who came to be amused, and, to a man, they rebelled at being thought picturesque, or quaint, as Brother Jones had intimated.

Melody had no reason for keeping his secret any longer. Cuthbert was beyond the range of babbling tongues. His plan was simplicity itself. The Dry Shoshone near its source was not absolutely dry at any time of the year.

For three or four hundred yards the creek flowed through solid rock. The water settled in pockets there. Inasmuch as it was the only water within miles, he knew that Cuthbert would have to find it sooner or later. The day that he did was intended to mark his downfall. Those water-pockets were deep with sand, and fairly alive with iron pyrites—fool's gold.

There wasn't a chance in the world that the boy would know what he had found. Melody could picture him—the unskilled, youthful discoverer of a bonanza. A mad running of hands through those precious sands, the filling of a bag, and then the breaking of all speed-records to get back to the Bull's Head. A wild flight, then, to Winnemucca to have his samples assayed and his claims registered. There, in that distant metropolis of Humboldt County, would the truth hit him. Being a fool in private was bad enough, but being one in public was something that even a more hardened man than Cuthbert would run from. Melody chuckled. Thus would he square himself.

MELODY'S clairvoyant nature proved itself to be of flattering exactness. Late afternoon of Cuthbert's first day in the Shoshone Basin found him far more anxious about where the water for the evening's coffee was to come from than any such trivial matter as an immediate finding of precious metal.

His old cow-horse became imbued with the same desire by sunset, and, in spite of Cuthbert's efforts, led him to the water-pockets.

In all fairness, the boy was to be forgiven that first mad thrill as he stretched out to drink and caught sight of the glittering pyrites which studded the sand. Wiser men than he had passed the Klondyke with less reason. A thirsty, untutored Indian, knowing nothing of fool's gold, made that great find in quite this same fashion.

Perspiration beaded the boy's forehead, to be immediately followed with blighting chills. Cuthbert's nerves had tied themselves into knots. He scooped up handfuls of the gravel with its golden-colored flakes. They were of a gossamer thinness, and so brittle that they went to powder between thumb and forefinger. But not a shadow of suspicion darkened Mr. Adams' mind. He was for dashing to the Bull's Head at once. Night was upon him, however, and he reluctantly set about making camp.

Morning found him hollow-eyed. He had been up most of the night replenishing his fire of dead sage. Strange animals had kept him company—annoying little rats for one thing, and a horde of barking fiends—coyotes or wolves—he didn't know which and cared less. Their infernal yip-yipping had kept his hair on edge for hours.

Quiet and warmth came with the sun, and after a reassuring glance at his find, he rolled up for an hour's relaxation. There, fast asleep, Tim Silver found him. Tim's possible presence in the basin had not registered in Melody's mind.

Cuthbert became aware of his companion as he squatted before a fire of his own making, frying the Adams bacon.

"Coffee's in that square tin," the boy yawned. He liked being taken possession of in this fashion. It smacked of the *camaraderie* of the Old West, and then, too, here was a witness to his claims.

"Gettin' up, eh?" Tim mumbled. "The hours you boys do keep! I came all the way from Rock Creek already this A.M. Won't be seein' much of me over here after this."

"No?" It was an honest question. Tim turned on him with surprise.

"You don't mean you ain't heard?" he inquired. "Old man Adams and the Taylor boys got together down in Frisco seems like. Word came out to the ranch yesterday that old Henry had bought ever'-thin' this side of the hills from our outfit. Funny you didn't hear."

"I been out a couple days," Cuthbert lied, wondering all the time if this sale of property would affect his rights.

"Glad to see the Double A git this lemon." Tim laughed. "Be all right if they was a little water here in the summer. You can't drive a critter down here after the spring flood-water goes off."

"Ain't many people handing old Henry any lemons," the boy allowed. "Guess he'll be up most any day now."

"Guess he will," Tim agreed, as he got

to his feet. "I'll give you a hand with the pans and get along."

"Don't bother. Say, Tim; before you go, I want to show you something. Come on over to those water-pockets."

Tim stopped short and sized up the boy quizzically. He laughed then, or, rather, snorted his amusement.

"I wondered how long it'd take you boys to think of that," he chattered. "Yes, sir; I was beginnin' to be disappointed in you all. Melody must be showin' his age."

Cuthbert did not catch the drift of the old man's words.

"What you talking about?" he demanded.

His innocence only made Tim laugh the louder.

"You can't fool me," he chuckled. "I'm wise, and I agree with you. I think he deserves it. Send him up here—he'll be cured forever."

"Him who?" Cuthbert snapped.

"That damned dude who's stayin' at your place. You're aimin' to send him up here lookin' for gold, and when he sees those pyrites in the water-pockets, he'll go mad. That's what I mean. Go to it, says I. I ain't got no morals."

The boy's abashed appearance was answer enough for the old man. Picking up the frying-pans and the pot, he went over to the creek bed to wash them, a very superior laugh trailing behind him.

Red-hot anger seethed in Cuthbert's soul as he watched Tim. He saw the abyss into which he had almost plunged. The fortune he had held for a night was gone. He could stand that; but damn their souls for sending him out to make a fool of himself! It was a stock joke, too. They hadn't thought it necessary to devise new means for his humiliation. And his father was coming to witness his shame.

"You wait!" He cursed an imaginary Melody. "If I can't crawl out of this, I am a fool."

Tim was back then and getting into his saddle.

"You won't be coming into the basin any more, eh?" Cuthbert asked.

"Last time."

"You're sure of that?"

"Shucks, ain't no reason to lie about it. I ain't goin' to spoil your party."

When he was gone, the boy sat down to face the first real crisis of his life. Many strange things presented themselves, but, although they carried some promise of revenge, they left him still the fool, the dupe.

Cuthbert had started the facing of this problem and his search for an adequate revenge by sitting still and lashing his mind for a solution. Noontime found him more active. A faint spark had flashed in his brain, and he was up and about, fanning it into a healthy flame.

THE idea grew and grew. Figures proved his case. It was possible. Melody and his brothers would wear the shoe they had intended for him. And they would sweat in the broiling sun and he would lash them on. Oh, it was a fitting revenge that he had stumbled onto. If his father would only stay away for another week! Cuthbert had to risk it.

Young Mr. Adams spent the rest of that day in perfecting nis plans. He could find no flaw in them. So, on the following morning, he began picking his way toward the Bull's Head. At the river he stopped for a last checking-up of details. He ended by smiling. He shook his fist in the direction of the ranch-house, but it was not in anger. The vistas his revenge opened so pleased him that he melted to almost honest good will.

"Here comes your precious fool!" he muttered. "This fool's got nails in his shoes, though. Wait till I step on your tails."

With a wild whoop he sent Lillian Russell into a neck-breaking pace. Cuthbert had no need to worry about his audience. He held the center of the stage at the Bull's Head.

The cattle were not being worked; it was summer, the time of ease on the range. The long, hot, lazy days abounded in golden opportunities for the discussion of Cuthbert's present whereabouts. He had left on Tuesday. This was Thursday, and still no word of him.

Melody drove in about three that afternoon. He had been over on the river for a mowing-machine. He pulled his team to a halt as Boots came out to talk to him.

"Hain't heard nothin' yet. Mac says he may be daid—killed, droppin' off a ledge or somethin'."

"Ain't no luck like that left in this world."

"Well, what you think has happened to him?"

"Brother, I ain't doin' no thinkin' about him. I know he ain't dead, though. His kind don't die that young."

He clucked to his horses and was about to drive on when he caught sight of a tiny dust spot moving rapidly across the flats. Melody stood in his wagon to see the better. Boots quickly climbed up beside him. Neither spoke for the space of three minutes.

"That'll be him," Melody muttered. "Comin' to beat all hell, too."

"Hot dam! See him ride!" Boots grinned. "He's makin' a mile in nothin' flat."

Their excitement brought the others.

"Don't no one laugh when he gits here," Melody warned. "You-all want to humor him aplenty. If any of you old women try to put him wise, I'll bust yuh!" "Bust" being synonymous with sudden death.

For all of his haste, it took Cuthbert fifty minutes to cover the distance between the river and the Bull's Head. He slid from his saddle white-lipped.

"Hey, Melody!" he called. "Come here!"

Melody hurried across the yard.

"I've got it," Cuthbert whispered chokingly. "The Dry Shoshone—the water-pockets. You know the place. We're rich, man!"

"Don't—don't get excited now." The cowboy's voice trembled, but not from his sudden rise to fortune. "What yuh goin' to do? Yuh brought some of the stuff with yuh, I suppose."

Cuthbert began to pull a bag from his saddle-horn.

"Don't show it here," Melody cautioned him. "Don't say a word. Some of these boys might take it into their heads to get a slice of that property. You ought to have an assay made right off. And you got to file on it, too."

"I know. I put up my monuments," the boy answered. "I'm going back there to-night. Here's fifty dollars. You get a horse and get to Winnemucca as quickly as you can. There's a rough map of the property." He handed the bag of gravel to Melody. "Take a look at it as soon as you get away from the ranch."

"You think *I'd* better go?"

"You bet! I'm not going to leave until I've got that gravel where it will stay put. There's no trees up there. We might get a cloudburst any day. I'm going to get a scraper, and take all the men Cash will let me have and go back there and dig it out. I'll freight the ore down here. I want it where I can keep close to it."

Melody's eyes bulged. This tone of authority was new in the boy, and when Cuthbert placed his hand on the cowboy's arm, the red-haired one winced.

"We didn't understand each other at first," his partner went on, "but it's all right now. You thought I was a sissy, a stuck-up kid. Well, maybe I was. I'm over that. Before I'm through I'll make you the richest cowboy on the range."

Melody hung his head—not for shame but to hide his guilt.

" 'S all right—Bert."

Young Mr. Adams almost trembled under that touch of familiarity.

"I'll get goin' right off," Melody promised. "But, honest, I wouldn't talk too much."

MELODY saw himself that afternoon as he knew others must have seen him in the days before Mr. Volstead dampened things by drying them. He sat his saddle all humped over, cursing every hot mile he put between himself and the ranch. The bag of alleged ore he had long since tossed into the greasewood. True enough, no one could laugh at him for filing on the Dry Shoshone, but going to an assayer with that mess of iron and gravel was the very ignominy he had reserved for Cuthbert.

At least, he had fifty dollars to squander. Under other circumstances it would have been a windfall. A great heaviness sat upon Melody's shoulders as he paused to think of the reception he would receive on his return. Boots and the others would curse him to his dying day for making them slave in the broiling sun on the upper Dry Shoshone. He knew well enough that Cash would have to do as Cuthbert wished. And no one of them would dare tell the boy the truth. How that individual was to be dissuaded at this late last was something that he could not well foresee. Melody came to one decision, however. He would stay away as long as his money lasted. Give a thing time, and anything might happen.

So while he spent Cuthbert's money and wasted his own time in town, the pot boiled at the Bull's Head.

Truly, Melody showed excellent judgment in keeping his distance. Those wild-eyed men toiling in the Dry Shoshone would have done him violent mischief had they been able to lay hands on him. For three days they had been sweating at their task, filling barrels and bags with worthless gravel. Teamsters swore as they snaked the stuff over tortuous hills.

Young Mr. Adams developed into a worse taskmaster than his father ever had been. The bed of the Dry Shoshone began to take on the appearance of a subway excavation, and the men who toiled in it hated him with growing fervor. Cuthbert was being taken seriously enough now. Were men ever engaged in a more foolish endeavor? The stupidity and folly of it! And yet they were helpless. The least slowing-up was enough to bring the boy down upon them with a torrent of words. Brother Jones appealed to the foreman.

"What can I do?" Cash demanded. "Do you think I'm goin' to tell that boy that he's been made a fool of? You tell him if you want to. That damn Melody is to blame for all of it. The only thing we can do is to stay dumb. He'll find out soon enough that he's made a mistake. If we tell him now, there'll be a lot of familiar faces missin' when the fall round-up comes on."

ON THE fifth day, even Cuthbert had to admit that they had finished their task. The last bag had been filled. Cuthbert climbed onto one of the wagons and the mule-team went coughing through the dust toward home.

On this very day, the "richest cowboy on the range" came lumbering down Bridge Street, much the worse from too intimate association with contraband liquor. He was broke and most unhappy. His departure could not be long delayed now. As he slouched past the Eldorado Hotel, a man called to him.

"Hey, you, Melody!"

The red-haired one turned at the sound of that voice. In the doorway stood old Henry.

"What are you doing in town?" the old cattleman demanded.

Melody looked about wildly. His first impulse was to flee. He knew the temper of this wrathful old man when roused. Wait until he had reached the ranch and learned what had been going on in his absence! Why couldn't he have stayed away another week? Well, a lot of lying and a little truth had gotten Melody into trouble; maybe the same formula would get him out of it.

"Why, I came in for Mr. Bert," he drawled. "He thinks he's found a mine."

The old man thawed on hearing Cuthbert referred to in such friendly fashion.

"Where's his mine?"

"Up the Dry Shoshone."

"Hain't no gold there. Who touted him onto that?"

Melody's feet began climbing over one another.

"Why—er—I allow I'm to blame for that. He thinks he's got somethin', though. I been in filin' on it for him."

"Sounds like he's been having a tolerable good time. How's his health?"

"He's just runnin' over with health. I suppose he's gettin' a little bit anxious about me. I been in town a *few* days."

Henry had not been any too sure of Cuthbert's success at the ranch. Therefore the good news made him affable.

"You leave your horse here," he ordered. "Throw your saddle in the back of that car there, and you can ride out with us. Mr. Winthrop is going along, on his way to Eden."

Melody reeled away white of face. His cup of misery had run over at the mention of Mr. Horace Winthrop's name, that important person being the best known mining engineer in the West.

The cowboy got his saddle and, throwing it over his shoulder, stumbled back to the waiting car. A man going to his doom could not have moved more reluctantly.

The roads were bad a few miles from town, so the car traveled at a snail's pace. Mr. Winthrop asked many questions about Cuthbert's mine, but Melody denied any knowledge or interest in mining. Old Henry was more successful. He confined himself to asking after the boy's conduct and happiness. Melody never lied better.

"Yes, sir; just a chip off the old block, I says to myself. He'll do to take along, I says, if you'll only give him time."

Old Henry fairly beamed. It was praise of a sort that meant more to him than all of the plaudits of the world in which his wife moved with varying success. Melody was quick to see that he had maneuvered in the right direction. He would have had Cuthbert roping wild horses in another mile.

IT WAS supper-time when they arrived at the ranch. Melody quietly stole away, having no desire to witness the meeting between father and son. With a hangdog look in his eyes, he entered the dining-room, where the boys were at their evening meal. Cups came down with a thud as they recognized him. Melody dropped into a chair and sent his hat sailing into a corner of the room. Nobody spoke.

"Well, somebody say somethin'," he growled.

"If I say anythin' to you," Boots muttered contemptuously, "I'll say it with flowers. You'll be here, but you won't know it."

"I ain't so cultured as you, Boots," Brother Jones cackled. "I'll tell what's what, and I'll tell him plenty."

And he did. Not a minute of those five days in the blistering sun on the Dry Shoshone but received attention. Brother was profane, but wonderfully proficient. Melody wriggled and writhed in his chair until his best pants were as shiny as Charlie's silver-plated spoons.

"And you mean he don't know—not even yet?"

"Of course he don't know," Brother asserted. "The big storeroom is packed to the ceilin' with that damn stuff we broke our backs diggin' up. The Dry Shoshone looks like it was dug for a lake."

"O Gawd!" Melody moaned. "And his paw's just come! Winthrop's with him."

Melody was not the only one on whom Mr. Winthrop's presence seemed to weigh heavily. Old Henry had barely finished greeting his son when he suggested that the boy let the engineer have a look at his "stuff." Mr. Adams, senior just knew what the verdict would be, and he was diplomatist enough to want bad news from an outsider rather than from himself. But Cuthbert had shaken his head wisely.

"No."

"No?" Old Henry's tone was short.

"Just dirt," Cuthbert answered, with a smile.

His father's eyes widened.

"What fool play is this?"

Cuthbert whispered strange words in his ear. Instant understanding flowed through his father's brain.

"Gawd!" he choked. "My Gawd!" He laughed and roared until his face went purple. "Listen to this Winthrop," he called. "And he's my son, too. Don't forget that."

The sound of their laughter did not reach the dining-room. Melody had not finished eating when Cash bellowed:

"The big boss wants the bunch of you in the office. He says to snap it up."

Melody got to his feet.

"Boys," he murmured, "I know what we're goin' to get. I reckon it's all my fault. I ain't goin' to blame nobody but me. I'll get my time and get out."

With shuffling feet they slunk into the office. The room was deserted as they filed in. Five long minutes dragged by without bringing old Henry. Visits to this sanctum had been always so universally disastrous to them that these minutes of waiting became a period of contrition as well as a time of grace in which to prepare themselves for the worst. By grunts, groans and low, not understandable mutterings, they voiced the misery that was in their hearts. The sound of steps on the stairs silenced them. The old man, with Cuthbert and Mr. Winthrop, strode into the room.

Henry's eyes swept the office. Melody was seated in the corner, peering out of the window, a dejected figure. The old man cleared his throat vehemently.

"Boys," he began, "I brought you in to tell you that I'm plumb ashamed of you!" It was a characteristic opening. "For twenty years I've been looking forward to the day that my boy could take my place here. I wanted to be on hand to meet him when he came, but I told myself that wan't any way to educate him. I figured there wan't no better teachers than you boys. Hell's fire! You don't know nothing. I'll prove it to you before I'm through.

"Soon as Melody said 'mine' to me, I suspected the crowd of you had thrown me down. Nobody could tell me there was gold on the Dry Shoshone. Hain't I been there a thousand times? And didn't I just buy all that range from Alf Taylor? Wasn't any good to Alf or his brother. Didn't know what good it was going to be to me, but I'm an old land-hog, anyways. And then, too, I thought maybe it might come in handy for my boy some day. But I'm damned if I ever intended he should mine it. When young fellows get the mining-bug, they're through with cattle—that is, as a rule—as a rule. I reckon you boys know there's been considerable mining going on up there for the past few days. Melody, step over here."

The unhappy cowboy dragged himself to the center of the room.

"Why did you fill my boy's head with that wildcat scheme?"

"I didn't fill his head with nothin'. He wanted to mine. I told him the Dry Shoshone——"

Henry cleared his throat unpleasantly.

"Didn't you know there wan't anything up there?"

"Humph— Gold's where you find it, ain't it?"

"Gold?" the old man asked the question as if he had listened to heresy. "No—no gold. Bert found something up there better than gold."

Melody blinked his eyes.

"You says which?" he drawled.

"Says water!" Henry snapped. "Ain't no flies on my boy. He saw what all of us missed. With those water-pockets cleaned out, the Dry Shoshone will flood the basin in the spring. We'll build a retaining wall and have enough water to last us until August. Wait till Alf Taylor hears this." He flashed his eyes until his men cowered. "Teachers, eh? You? Teach what?" Old Henry laughed his fill. "Damn it," he cried suddenly, "you boys wouldn't 'a' sweated in that sun for me! You'd 'a' quit cold; but Bert here, just a kid, makes you break your necks, and you ain't got a whimper for a comeback. Say—am I getting obsolete?"

No one dared answer. Melody sat bowed over, running his fingers through his hair.

"To think," he said slowly, "that you didn't try to find no gold or nothin'." A long pause, and then: "Sendin' me to town, too, an' bringin' that stuff down here an' puttin' it in the storeroom. I don't git that."

Cuthbert grinned.

"Why, boys, I'm surprised," he drawled, in imitation of Melody. "I thought you'd get *that* right off. Old Tim Silver told me the only way for a tenderfoot to get along in this country was to throw the prod a little. Tim knew what he was talking about."

The fact that there had been foul play on Mr. Silver's part caused many foreheads to wrinkle. The traitorous Tim would most certainly hear about this. Melody, though, could only roll his head uncomprehendingly. He could hear old Henry growling,

"Run along now, the bunch of you!" The old man had never felt prouder in his life. The younger Adams had made the grade! "Here I was, thinking I was just about through with ranching. Just waiting for Bert to grow up. Hell's bells! If there's this much fun left in it, I'm going to begin all over again. You, Cash—no work this week-end. We'll have a little *fiesta* to celebrate this thing. Ain't nothing too good for Bert and my boys."

Melody got up with the others, scratching his head in sore perplexity. Cuthbert caught him as he attempted to steal out.

"Everything's all wrong if we can't shake on this," he said, and the boy offered his hand. A smile broke through then, and Melody's face relaxed for the first time that day. He was the goat, but even a goat has a sense of humor.

THE moon was up, the yard aglow with vibrant light; water tinkled as it dripped from the horse-trough. The plaintive croaking of a frog drifted in from an irrigation-ditch in the alfalfa field. The world was still, waiting. Save for the mellow light from the kitchen, where Chinese Charlie scraped his pots, the Bull's Head was in darkness.

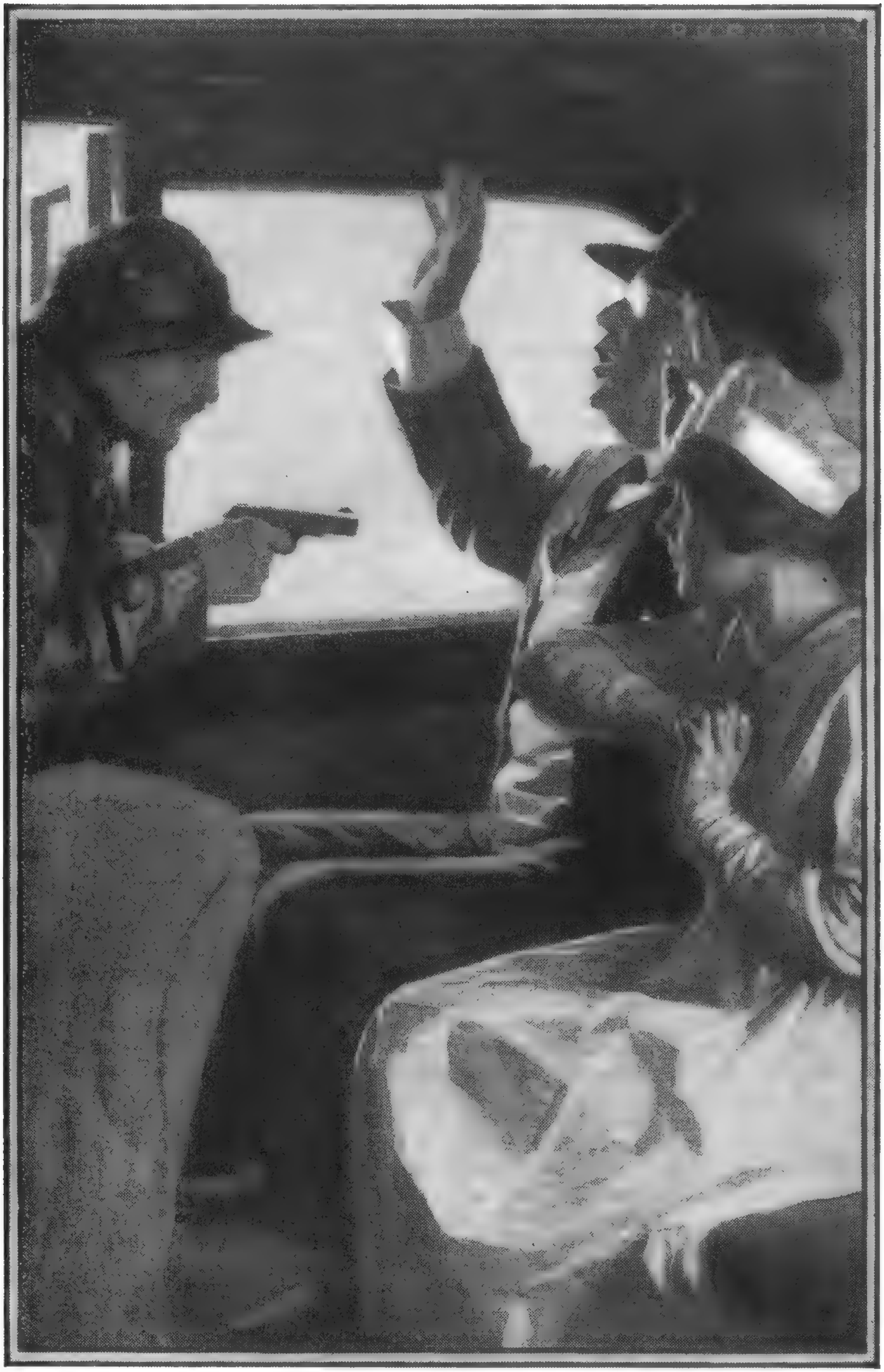
A low murmur of voices rose from the porch. Glowing cigarettes punctuated the deeper shadows. Some one was talking. Melody lounged in the doorway.

"And us sendin' that kid up there to make a fool of him, and his turnin' round and figurin' out how to make that good-for-nothin' pasture-land worth a mint." The speaker shook his head. "But that's how old Lady Luck plays it—good for——"

"Lady Luck!" some one cut in sarcastically. "My hell! Luck ain't no lady."

Melody smiled.

"Ain't it the truth?" he murmured.



"You've said it!" The valet pushed the muzzle of an automatic toward the old man's chest. "Hands up!" Hope gave a cry. The man in the valet's oilskins was Kelsey.

A Mystery Serial—The Strange Story of a Girl

SWALLOWED UP

Bristow Discovers That Even the Most Faultlessly Conceived Plans Are Subject to Human Vagaries. Hope Ranger Ends One Adventure, Only to Set Forth on Another

By Mrs. Wilson Woodrow

Illustration by R. K. Ryland

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

PUSHED backward from the door, still with that constraining clutch on his throat, Dr. Morton's popping eyes were fixed on Bristow's face. His amazement was even greater than his fright.

But there was a quality in this summary and violent capture which prevented him from following his primitive impulse to struggle and kick. The hand that choked him seemed also to hold him up. Bristow was pale and certainly determined, but there was nothing of the hot anger that his action would indicate. On the contrary, he conveyed to Morton by some electric telepathy that his assault was necessary and entirely friendly.

At the head of the stairs he released his victim with a low "Sh," his finger laid against his lips, and, giving the house physician a moment to gain his breath, threw an arm about his shoulder and led him, stumbling and still purple and gasping, down the steps to the office.

Morton weaved his way to a chair and flopped down, making strange noises in his throat and stretching his neck. He looked vaguely, desolately about the room and down at his own person as if to convince himself that this was really he and these were truly familiar surroundings.

It had taken all his courage, a temerity that he felt was almost beyond his powers, to listen at Higgins' door. The interview with Charlie and Kelsey had been so astounding, their revelations so upsetting to his belief in Bristow, that it had required long and patient effort on their part to convince him of the truth of their statements and induce him to undertake the task they had assigned him.

Morally, on the proof they gave him, he could not refuse to accept it, and yet he shrank from it with all his trouble-abhorring soul. He was spiritually scrupulous and fastidious, and to play the spy was revolting to him.

Bristow caught his breath once he had Morton safely in the office. Things looked bad, and he knew it. And a spasm of rage shook him for a moment as he looked at Morton. He controlled it instantly. In this crisis, Morton was too valuable to him to let him see anything like that. For everything, now, depended upon knowledge, and Bristow understood perfectly well just how many gaps there were in what he knew.

He sat still a minute, arranging the facts, as he knew them, in his mind, so he could mark the gaps and make his questions to Morton mean something and promise some useful return.

The criminal "Combine" had stolen Hope Ranger. That was fact number one, and the one out of which all the others grew. She had been drugged and kidnaped on

Fifth Avenue, and had, so far as her frantic father, Loring Ranger, his lawyer, Eustace Higby, the police and every one else not in the secret could say, simply been swallowed up. But Bristow knew that the Combine was guilty, and that he, the head of one of the best known and most successful sanatoriums, or private lunatic asylums, near New York, was one of its members, just as the notorious ex-Alderman William Higgins, who lived in the sanatorium ostensibly as a patient, was its chief.

So he knew, too, of course, that Hope had been brought to the asylum and held there as a lunatic, being described as the sister of Anita Copley, his head nurse, to whom she bore a striking resemblance. That, indeed, had suggested the whole plan; it was Anita, made aware of her resemblance to a millionaire's daughter, who had schemed to turn that chance to her advantage.

He could go further. He knew definitely that the first demand for ransom had reached Loring Ranger, Hope's father, through Juarez Charlie, who had been tramp and confidence man. A message, scrawled in the cryptic tramp sign-language, had told Charlie to tell Ranger that Hope was alive and well, and to order him to send her a hat.

He grinned at the memory of that hat. That had been clever—an idea of Anita's. A photograph of Hope taken in the hat had been sent to Ranger to prove that she really was alive and well, and with it had gone a demand for a hundred thousand dollars in Liberty Bonds. They had had the bonds, in spite of a bungling attempt of Charlie's to interfere. But where were they now?

Again, he knew definitely that Dr. George Kelsey, who had been, like Morton, one of his assistants, had overheard a conversation of his, incriminating him. Kelsey had resigned promptly; he, Bristow, had had him held—alleging that he, like Hope, was a lunatic. A mistake, that—for Kelsey and Hope had met, had talked and had contrived to escape together in his own car.

He had given chase. He had tracked them to an old house of Loring Ranger's and had found Hope—rather, she had stumbled into his arms. But Kelsey! He had supposed, from what Hope, who had during her imprisonment feigned madness, had told him, that Kelsey, trying to escape in a boat, had been drowned in a squall. Yet he wasn't sure. That was one of the things that baffled him.

Again, though he didn't know how, Juarez Charlie, beyond doubt, knew where Hope was. That had complicated things. Any idea of ransom was ended; even Higgins and Anita admitted that. And they planned now to kill Hope. But he knew a trick worth two of that. In his last talk with her she had shown signs of having succumbed to his charms, as many a woman had before her. There was a stake worth playing for! To double-cross Higgins—to elude Anita, who would, of course, assert claims upon him, based upon a relation of which he had long been tired—and to marry the heiress of Loring Ranger's millions, rescued by him from death or a worse fate!

Yet he had much to do, and little time before him. It would not be easy to fool Higgins and a jealous cat like Anita. More, he had to know what was going on outside. Morton—he had known, the minute he caught him eavesdropping at Higgins' door, that Morton had been reached by Hope's friends outside. But he had to be sure of just what had happened.

MORTON sat trembling. To be caught as he had been, to endure a cyclonic personal attack and have the breath choked out of him! This climax of failure and ignominy reduced him to pulp. It was more than his retiring, timid nature could bear. And yet, as he sat rallying his scattered senses, he became still more aware that Bristow was not only unhostile but even placating.

"A thousand apologies, old man! I hope I didn't bruise your neck or jar you too much. But you can thank your stars that it was I who ran into you and not one of Higgins' men."

Bristow stood on the hearth-rug, straightening out his cuffs, and surveyed Morton reflectively. The little man was not sure yet whether he had been as lucky as his chief had pointed out. In the reaction from his complete trust in Bristow to the horror and suspicion which Kelsey's disclosures had roused in him, he was disinclined to believe anything the man said. So he sat mute, twisting his head about and feeling his larynx with tentative fingers. Bristow read his thoughts as easily as he did most things.

"You needn't be afraid of me, Morton," he said earnestly. "I'm only too grateful to you—too utterly grateful."

A shattered faith is not easily restored. Still, Morton remembered, Bristow had fought to save the girl, although this merit was counterbalanced in his mind by Miss Copley's accusations. If these held a grain of truth, the superintendent's plans were only a little less sinister than hers and Higgins'.

"How much of the conversation up there did you overhear?" Bristow asked, without betraying too much interest.

"A—a good deal of it," Morton stammered. "Enough to know that you were against them."

Bristow rubbed his hands. He knew his own skill in presenting a case, his power of influencing judgment and making black glisten as white, and he did not doubt that he would bring Morton round ultimately. But the fellow was slow and obstinate, and he couldn't afford to spend much time in argument.

"Suppose," he said, "before we go deeply into this matter, you tell me just what you were doing up there. Listening, of course. But why?"

Morton twiddled his thumbs and looked confused. He was no strategist—not his the verbal fluency to cloak and veil the truth effectively on the spur of the moment.

"I have felt for some days that there was something wrong in the matter of this girl. I—I read the papers. I suspected."

Bristow waved his hand and smiled commiseratingly.

"Don't go on trying to invent. You're not adroit enough. You'd be helping that girl far more by telling me the facts now. Time is flying, and——"

Morton jumped.

"Time! That's it," he said. "I must go. Don't try to keep me here, Doctor. I must go before they——"

He stopped, looking apprehensively at the door.

"No need of haste," Bristow returned equably. "There'll be nothing done for two or three hours yet." He raised his eyes to indicate that he was referring to the two on the floor above. "However, to be quite safe—" He pressed a button.

His ring was answered almost immediately.

"Let me know if Mr. Higgins comes downstairs, or if he orders his car," he said. "I want to speak to him before he goes out."

"Yes, sir."

The man withdrew.

"Now, Morton"—speaking with a sort of jocular command—"out with it." Then, more seriously: "You must have heard enough to realize that I stand with the person or persons who are trying to rescue Miss Ranger. Who are these people that you were in conference with during the two hours that you were away this noon?"

Morton bit his lip, revolving in his puzzled brain what kind of answer to make.

"Was it Ranger?" probed Bristow. "Or his lawyer, or a detective? I hardly think so. They would have been here before now, on what you were able to tell them."

Morton, scrunched up in his chair, half yielding to Bristow's influence and yet mindful of his promise to Kelsey, shook his head.

"My dear Doctor"—Bristow threw all the weight of his powerful personality into the words—"this is no time to keep up an unjustifiable silence. You are taking a responsibility on yourself in doing so that later you will bitterly regret. The prime necessity now is to think and to act quickly. How can you doubt me after what you have heard? We—your friends outside, and you and myself inside—must act in concert, and soon—very soon."

FROM the moment he had surprised Morton at his eavesdropping, Bristow had grasped the full import of his subordinate's action and the imminence of his own danger. And since then his mind had been busy contriving a story that would meet the facts and yet supply him with an unassailable defense. He welcomed this opportunity of testing it on Morton.

"Let me explain my position; it may serve to clear up your mind." He spoke slowly, choosing his words. "Morton, as God is my judge, I knew nothing of this terrible affair until last night, after I failed to find Kelsey. Then Higgins and Miss Copley thought it best to take me into their confidence. It was a thunderclap to me. Up to that time I never questioned but that the girl was Miss Copley's sister. There was no reason to doubt it; the likeness alone would convince anybody.

"I thought at first Higgins and Copley had gone insane themselves. In fact, I didn't know what to believe, how to act. This morning, if I had followed my impulse, I would have telephoned the girl's father at once. But I did not do this for several reasons. In the first place, I felt sure that Miss Ranger would be in her home by this evening; at that time it seemed to me that I was in a position to dictate to those two up-stairs, and I expected, foolishly enough, to make them see reason. I showed them this leniency because Higgins is the financier of this hospital and holds my notes for large amounts. Again, I argued, sentimentally perhaps, Loring Ranger would be so rejoiced at the recovery of his daughter that he would be willing to agree to a measure of immunity which would at least keep the identity of the sanatorium from the public. He could hardly allow me to suffer, I reasoned; since the moment I learned of the situation, I took steps to end it.

"Therefore I went to the meeting this afternoon in complete confidence. Well"—with a shrug—"you know the results. You must"—with affected sheepishness—"have thought me quite melodramatic. But in dealing with Higgins, I have learned, one has to talk his language. He thinks in plots, and suspects any motive that is not selfish and mercenary. So, in order to get his ear at all, I had to present a crafty scheme of worming myself into Ranger's good graces. All bunk, of course."

"But you're the superintendent here," Morton said, with unlooked-for vigor. "It seems to me that all you had to do was send for Miss Ranger and drive her home."

"Looks so, doesn't it?" Bristow smiled ironically. "But you don't know all the wheels within wheels here, you little recluse. Frankly, I don't dare oppose Higgins openly. It would spell my financial and professional ruin; it might even mean more. The man is a power."

MORTON was more bewildered than ever. Bristow's story impressed him. The old habit of faith was returning. Still, his promise to Kelsey? But if Kelsey knew that Bristow was with them, he would surely be glad of his aid.

"The people I saw to-day"—some force stronger than himself seemed drawing the words from him—"were Dr. Kelsey and a man who called himself 'Juarez Charlie.' "

Kelsey — alive! And Juarez Charlie! Bristow's fictitious thunderbolt had really fallen.

"Morton, what are you telling me? Kelsey and Juarez Charlie together? Impossible!" He scraped his chair back on the polished floor. "Where are they?"—still challenging the statement.

"At the old Rose house."

Morton had told everything now that he had sworn not to reveal, and he was agonizedly wondering whether he had been wise or merely treacherous.

A slow, crestfallen flush spread over Bristow's face. Higgins was right; he had muddled. He should never have abandoned the search of that house the night before. Creamer's information was good. And he had let the girl side-track him.

It broke upon him, a white light of instantaneous comprehension—she had been fooling him right along. Another thunderbolt! She was sane, the hussy—the clever, resourceful hussy! Playing the advanced neurotic well enough to deceive his trained observation! He cut short these galling reflections and turned abruptly to the business in hand.

"And you are their inside man? I see." He nodded at Morton. "When do you get in touch with them again?"

"I ought to be doing it now."

Bristow ignored the hint of restlessness.

"How did Juarez Charlie happen to be there?" He wanted all the links in the chain.

"I don't know that; but he was. And they have plenty of money. Oh, come to think of it, he said that he rode down here last night. There was something about a hat—a hat that had been bought by Mr. Ranger and then exchanged by Miss Copley for one that was to be sent here. That gave him the clue."

"Ah-h!" Bristow leaned back gloating, with restored complacency. The responsibility for the muddle was shifted from his shoulders to Anita's. He paced back and forth across the hearth-rug, deep in thought.

"To think of it!" he said musingly. "For the last year, Morton, as I discovered last night, Higgins and that woman have been working over their scheme. They started with Anita's likeness to Hope Ranger, which she discovered by chance, and worked it out step by step in the minutest detail. But they didn't stop there; they spent months in testing it, trying to find its weak spots and strengthen them. No engineer ever worked more carefully over his plans for a big bridge, no inventor over some revolutionary invention. Every contingency that might arise was considered and provided for. As a piece of mechanism it was faultless. But, like all things that involve the human element, it was subject to human vagaries. One misplaced fuse, and the whole contrivance was short-circuited. In this case, a woman, for the sake of saving a few pennies, exchanges a freak hat—and the skies fall. Morton, I become fatalistic."

He stood in contemplation, his elbow on the mantelpiece. If he allowed Morton to get in touch with Kelsey and Charlie, and they aided in the affair, there would be very little credit allotted to him and a great deal of suspicion. But if he, acting alone, could forestall these others and restore the girl to her parents, he could stipulate that neither his name nor that of his hospital should be made public, and any disparaging insinuations made against him by Charlie or Kelsey would seem inspired by chagrin. With all regard for their good intentions, there was just one fact that would loom large in the mind of the Rangers—he had returned the girl.

But the girl herself—sane throughout these weeks of detention. What would be her story? Hm. Something of a facer.

Still, he would have two or three hours during the drive to town to exercise his magnetism, his plausibility, his arts of persuasion. Would it be so hard a task to convince her? She had turned to him that morning. He glanced up into the mirror over the fireplace. Her naive admiration had not been all play-acting.

His vanity decided the question for him.

Rapidly he mapped out a plan of action. Higgins would probably not start on his drive until after dark. That disposed of him. Kelsey and Charlie would wait at the old house to hear from Morton. But Anita—how eliminate her? He looked down at Morton.

"Doctor, we must get Miss Ranger away at once. We will drive by the Rose place and pick up Kelsey and his friend on our way to town. What we have to meet now is the chance of interference by Miss Copley. Is there any one of the patients in a particularly bad way to-day?"

"Yes," replied Morton; "I've had to go twice to quiet Miss Susie Doane."

"Then call up Higgins' apartment and ask Miss Copley to relieve the nurse in charge until six o'clock. Make it a request from yourself. Tell her you have tried to reach me, but couldn't find me."

Morton complied.

"She said she would take charge at once," he reported, as he replaced the instrument on the table.

"Then let's be moving." Bristow motioned him toward the door.

They were in a small inner room of the superintendent's suite. There were no windows, only a skylight. As Morton turned his back, Bristow was on him, pinning his arms down and pushing him toward a closet.

Morton struggled frantically to free himself, but Bristow had all the advantage. He shoved him roughly into the closet and closed the door, locking it.

"Now," he said, breathing a little hard, "communicate with Kelsey if you can. Oh, kick and yell all you please; nobody will hear you."

TEN minutes later, Bristow unlocked the door of Hope's room, knocked and, without waiting for an answer, came in quickly.

She was standing in the middle of the floor, and as she saw him she smiled—a smile which he interpreted as a welcome. It was, in a measure; any one was better than Anita Copley. Then her eyes fell on the bundle he was carrying and she looked at him questioningly. He tossed it on a chair.

"For you," he said, and, coming nearer, took both her cold hands in his.

There was something new in his manner—an absence of pose, a gravity and forcefulness which she was quick to feel.

"Don't keep up any pretenses with me, Miss Ranger. It isn't necessary now. I—no; don't take it that way"—as she dragged her hands from his and looked at him with dilating eyes. "Wait! I'm your friend—your only one here. Until last night," he went on, "I believed, truly believed, that you were Miss Copley's sister. After you escaped, she and Higgins confessed their whole damnable plot to me. But I did not understand then, nor do they now, that you are and have been perfectly sane. I only discovered that this afternoon."

He was so manifestly sincere, so obviously speaking from a definite knowledge, that she was unable to doubt him. A terrible apprehension gripped her heart.

"How did you learn this?" Her voice was a thread.

"Through Kelsey," he answered.

She moaned and dropped her head in her hands. They had Kelsey, then! Everything—the escape, her sacrifice, his plans and her own—had all been useless.

"Where is George Kelsey?"

"At liberty. Quite safe. Still at the old house, for all I know. I have not seen him. I got all this from Morton, who has been in communication with him. My dear child"—he took her hands again and spoke with imperative tenderness—"won't you trust me? I am going to take you back to your home. But we must act quickly. You see that nurse's outfit?" He pointed to the bundle. "I want you to put it on at once. Try to look as much like Miss Copley as possible." He was borrowing Higgins' idea. "Fix your hair the same way. Then come out. I shall be waiting for you. Don't waste time in doubting me"—as she hesitated. "I would give my life to undo all this. But I tell you frankly you are in great danger from Copley and Higgins."

He had never been more impressive, and while she longed to believe in his assurance of Kelsey's freedom and his own desire to aid her, her instinctive distrust of him was too strong to be easily uprooted.

"I am going down-stairs now," he said, "to order my car. I'll be back immediately—so hurry."

"But if she comes?"

"She will not"—emphatically. "I have arranged for that."

"But if she does?"

"Then it's up to me." A flash in his eyes gave Hope a more heartening sense of the honesty of his intentions than any words he had spoken.

The moment he was out of the room she began to change into the garments he had brought. He might be lying to her; it might be only some new and crueler trick than any they had played on her. But in a choice of evils she would rather follow his lead than remain in the sanatorium at the mercy of Anita.

She had finished and was just putting on her nurse's bonnet and cape when he tapped again and entered.

"Good girl!" he said approvingly and, even in his haste, admiringly. "The car will be waiting. Come!"

THEY had turned to the door when it flew open and Anita faced them. Darkly flaming, she slammed the door behind her and stood, her venomous glances darting from one to the other, to fasten at last on Bristow.

"Got ahead of me, didn't you?" she jeered. "Thought you could switch me off, and that I'd stay nice and quiet while you two drove away in state? Not much! I knew you'd be up to something, and it didn't take me long to guess what."

His anger was white-hot, but he did his best to control it.

"Let me remind you, Miss Copley"—icily severe—"that you should be on duty elsewhere. You'll take my orders now, and return to your post."

"Oh, indeed?" She flaunted her sneers. "I wonder what the alderman will have to say to that."

He looked at her, a catlike gleam in her narrowed eyes.

"I think the alderman will probably have a good deal to say when he learns that it is you who are responsible for his plans going wild. I have discovered"—drawling slightly to tantalize her—"I have discovered just how Juarez Charlie got his tip that Miss Ranger was in this sanatorium."

"You have?" She tossed her head to cover a vague uneasiness aroused by his manner.

"Just that." He inclined his head slowly. "Through a small oversight, or, shall we say, inexcusable carelessness—most likely from feminine motives of economy—a hat, in which, I understand, a photograph of Miss Ranger was taken, was exchanged for another to be sent to you at this address—a direct clue not be to perverted or misproven in any possible way."

Anita tottered and, for an instant, closed her eyes. She saw the ground all at once cut from under her feet. She would have to bear the brunt of the whole fiasco. She thought of Higgins, his ruthlessness, his brutal implacability. And Bristow was moving to save himself, ready to gather the credit and applause of the hero. They would both pass the buck to her without a qualm.

She took swift stock of the situation. In the light of this new development, Higgins' scheme—anything but the return of the girl—was out of the question. They were all in the deep water now, and it was every one for himself. Still, she had a claim on Bristow; he would have to give her a helping hand.

Her whole bearing and expression altered. With the hot iron of necessity, she seemed to have smoothed out every wrinkle of passion. She stood before him—her superior—the respectful, composed nurse.

"You're right, Dr. Bristow. I forgot myself. I apologize. But I don't believe you want me to go back on duty or even remain in the hospital under the circumstances. If you will pay me what you owe me"—with a glance that Bristow rightly interpreted as meaning that she demanded a heavy stake—"I will leave at once."

His lip drew back, showing the edge of his teeth, his eyebrows peaked above unrelenting eyes.

"You are asking me to assist in your escape—the nurse who fooled me into believing Miss Ranger to be her sister, who has imposed this perhaps ineffaceable blot on my hospital?" He spoke with virtuous indignation. "And another reason for refusing to let you go: You will recall, Miss Copley, that after I learned of this unspeakable affair, my one thought was to avert a scandal. I was still lenient or weak enough to try to make Higgins and yourself listen to reason, instead of turning you over to the police, as I should have done; and you both defied me."

She took all this as mere preamble. He was talking for effect, showing her the line he meant to follow and strengthening his position with the girl at the same time. The sooner she took her cue the sooner she would accomplish her purpose. She did not think further than that. Her jealousy, for the moment at least, was in abeyance to her desperate impulse of self-preservation.

"I know—I know, Doctor. But you don't altogether understand. I have been a tool, an unwilling tool—a tool of Higgins. And you don't want any notoriety for your hospital. It wouldn't help Miss Ranger. But if I were to disappear, and I can do it, it would save you both a lot of unpleasant publicity. I can be with—friends, out of the way, in an hour's time, if I have the money. You see that, Doctor?"

"You can go down and get your week's salary from the cashier." He spoke with curt finality. "Further than that, I refuse to compromise with you."

The answer stunned her, overtaxed her carefully maintained repression.

"My week's salary? Doctor, I'll need money. It's too late to do anything in town, and I can't cash a check for a sufficient amount in the village. You always keep from five to ten thousand here in the safe, and I must have it."

She waited. His face was like flint; his eyes were stone cold. It frightened her, and she cast her reserve to the winds.

"You couldn't leave me here—with Higgins. For your own sake, you couldn't. He'll get off. He's got pull. But I—I—" She folded her arms. "You don't dare!"

"You will have a hard time implicating me in any of your criminal performances," he said haughtily. "The fact that, as soon as I learned of Miss Ranger's identity, I took steps to return her to her parents exonerates me."

SHE sought through her memory for some threat to hold over him. But Bristow was far-sighted. He had always left himself a loophole of escape from the other two. She had nothing—not even a scrap of paper—which would involve him, and his manner convinced her that neither had Higgins. Bristow had considered every contingency and discounted it. She knew him too well to doubt that. And he was now carrying the thing through with a high-handed audacity that would mean success, while she——

"Kelsey?" she said suddenly. "It's not certain that he's drowned. Suppose he turns up."

She paused triumphantly, sure that she had at last found the weak spot in his armor.

"Dr. Kelsey has turned up," he replied coolly. "He is alive and safe, I am happy to say, and I have been in communication with him. I owe the dear fellow all the amends I can make him. Another score against you, Miss Copley; I have you to thank for those doctored records that induced me to hold him here as a patient. One more reason"—sternly—"why I cannot connive at your proposed getaway."

Kelsey alive, and on terms with Bristow! She was past defiance now.

"You'll sacrifice me? You'll trample me in the mud? You mean it? You really mean it?" she muttered.

She seemed utterly to have forgotten Hope. He and she were alone together, and this was the end of the long drama between them—the merciless end.

Bristow, even in his sense of victory, felt a passing amazement. Anita, cowed, beaten, accepting the situation without more of a scene, was something new to him. But Anita was of as little concern to him now as so much flotsam under his feet. A new day was dawning for him—a respectable, honored, affluent day.

"Come," he said to Hope, and took her hand.

Anita stiffened. He was going—without a word, without even a glance at her, passing from her life in triumph. Her life! Again she thought of Higgins. The years that she had served him would count for nothing. He had always given her her share of any deal, but he had never let her forget that she was in his power. Auburn! She saw the gray prison walls; she felt the rough prison dress chafe her skin. She flung her arms out across the door, barring the way.

"Don't you try it! Don't you try it!"—her voice rising. "You'll settle with me before you go. I don't play the goat for you—or anybody else."

"Move aside!" Bristow commanded.

She sneered and held her ground. He attempted to push her away, but she had set her feet and did not budge. There was a brief, sharp struggle between them. She felt herself giving way before his greater strength.

"Harvey!" She was sobbing. "You wouldn't do it! You wouldn't! Not after all we have been to each other!"

He shut his teeth and made another and more successful effort to pull her from the door. She thrust her hand in her pocket, and jerking out the hypodermic syringe she had brought for Hope, jabbed at him with it.

He threw himself sideways, and shifted his grip to catch her by the arms. She wrested the right one free and, reaching over his shoulder, struck wildly at the back of his neck.

Suddenly he crumpled, fell heavily against her and slipped through her arms to the floor. By one chance out of a hundred, she had driven the needle into the base of his brain.

She stared down at him, stupefied. What was the matter? Had he fainted? A weak heart? She had never known it.

She was on her knees beside him, thrusting her hand through his waistcoat to his breast.

"He's dead!" she gasped.

She had lifted his head on her other arm. Now, as she withdrew it, she saw a fleck or two of blood on her starched white sleeve. She looked from it to the hypodermic which had fallen to the floor, and understood.

Screaming, she flung herself on his body, begging him to forgive her, to come back. She hadn't meant it. She wouldn't have harmed a hair of his head. She loved him, loved him, loved him!

DURING the struggle Hope had shrunk back. Then, at its appalling climax, she stood motionless, living through a century in a second.

While Anita was abandoning herself to her remorse and despair, the first staggering horror, the panic of helplessness passed. Hope's one idea now was flight. She started for the door.

The movement, light as it was, roused Anita. She rose to her knees and clutched the bunch of keys at her belt.

"You forget it's locked." She looked at the girl with such burning hatred, such evil intent that a chill ran down Hope's spine.

It was true. In her excitement she had lost sight of the fact that the spring-lock on the door could only be opened by one of the keys in Anita's possession. Now she knew that it was between her and this woman, and she was fighting not for freedom but for her life. The flaming devils in Anita's murky eyes showed her that she would have to meet the supernormal strength of frenzy.

But she knew, too, that the nurse underestimated her. During the time that she had feigned insanity, she had never let Anita suspect her real strength and agility. Even that morning she had taken her beating at the woman's hands as one overcome by superior might.

Anita came gliding toward her, circling nearer and nearer, following the method of a snake with a tranced bird. Hope waited, watching every movement. Trained in all manner of outdoor sports, she knew that she could depend on her fleetness and the ability to divine an opponent's next move before it was made; and she had proved to herself the night before that her muscles had not grown flabby from inaction.

Anita, mad to batter her, trample her, mar the beauty which she believed had taken Bristow from her, made a rush, her hands crooked like claws to tear the girl's face. Hope caught her wrists and forced them down.

With a wrench, the other released herself, and the two grappled. At last Hope succeeded in throwing Anita off and sent her spinning across the room; but she did not lose her foothold.

A table was between them now, and Anita could afford to spend a moment in getting her breath. Then, snarling, gritting her teeth like a wild animal, she came on again; and again Hope fought on the defensive.

She knew that Anita's energy was a flame without fuel, that it was now at its soaring height, but must soon flicker. The danger lay in the nurse overcoming her before this fictitious, dynamic vigor began to ebb.

She bent herself to the task of holding the mad woman off, to eluding her wild onslaughts and slipping away from her crushing grasp, rather than to close with her and make it a test of relative strength.

Her every effort was to wear Anita out, and she felt at last that she was succeeding. The nurse's face was mottled, her breath coming in short, whistling gasps as she made her final, furious dash.

They were near the bed, and Hope, seeing this, did not step aside but took the nurse by surprise, cannonading into her with such force that Anita rocked, her heels shot out, and she fell backward across the bed.

In a second Hope was on top of her, dragging her arms together, holding down Anita's wrists with one hand and tearing at the bedclothes with the other.

She managed to jerk the counterpane free, and with difficulty, for the woman struggled furiously, wound it round Anita's body, binding down her arms. She began to scream, and Hope stuffed the end of the spread in her mouth. It was an effectual gag.

She tore a sheet into strips and with them securely tied Anita's hands and ankles. This accomplished, she stood up.

The walls seemed to go swimming round her. Miss Copley here, Bristow's body there, the room was to her a noisome, unclean cage, not only to her senses but to her soul. She must get out of it—anywhere.

She was surprised to find herself suddenly cool and determined. She was not trembling; there was no feeling of exhaustion; she was ready for the next venture.

She bent over Anita and detached the keys from her belt. Then with rapid fingers she fastened up her fallen hair, and picking up the bonnet which Anita had snatched from her head in the struggle, straightened it out and put it on.

Without a shudder she stooped and dragged Bristow's body from the door, found the right key and walked out, locking the door behind her and putting the key in her pocket.

A glance showed her that the corridor was empty, and she walked toward the stairs. Bristow was dead, and Anita was out of it for hours to come. No one would go to that room. She had a chance of escape.

But Kelsey? Where was he? If Bristow had lied, and he was not at the old house but here, she must save him. How? There was nothing she could do here. Any attempts at inquiry would only result in her own discovery and—well, after that the deluge! The only way she could help him was from the outside. She saw that clearly. Now to reach the front door.

BRISTOW had told her he was going to take her home; but did he really mean it? Would his car be waiting, as he had said? Perhaps the chauffeur had already been given his orders. In any event, she would have to make the man believe that she was Anita Copley and that Bristow had been detained and was sending her to town on an important errand. She must not show a quiver of uncertainty; everything depended on her power to carry the situation. Her nerve might fail her if there were only herself to consider; but for Kelsey—to free him—she was ready to do and dare anything.

She was half-way down the stairs when a nurse came running up from the hall below. The woman stopped at the landing and waited for her.

"I was just coming after you, Anita," she said. "Lovely night you've picked to go out!"

"Yes; and I'm late into the bargain," Hope answered, imitating as well as she could Miss Copley's voice and mannerisms.

Without stopping, she hurried on.

"Bad as it is, I wish I was going with you," the nurse called after her.

Hope did not reply. She was putting as much distance as possible between them. But the brief encounter had given her fresh courage. One trickle of the Rubicon was crossed, if not the whole stream.

Through the wide hall door she saw the drenched lawn, the trees gray and unsubstantial in the heavy mist that was driving in from the sea. Thank heaven! The car was waiting.

Her eyes fixed on this welcome sight, she crossed the parqueted floor.

"Wait!" bade a heavy, cracked voice. She looked up, startled to see the tall, bowed figure of Higgins. "Not so fast, my dear."

He gripped her arm, and slipped his own through it. Then, leaning heavily on her shoulder, he forced her to keep step with him as he hobbled across the porch.

"Right down the steps now, and into the car. What made you so late, Anita?"

Hope mumbled an unintelligible response and glanced wildly about her. What was before her now? The car, she saw, was not Bristow's but Higgins'. His chauffeur and valet sat on the front seat in their oilskins, the hoods pulled over their heads. A spatter of rain fell on her cheek. She was swept by a surging longing to scream, protest. But the porch was empty; there was no one about. Anyhow, it would only result in her being returned to that room. Never! She preferred the unknown. And he had said, "Anita." She might be able to keep up the deception.

With a firmer step she walked down to the driveway and entered the limousine. Higgins followed and slammed the car door shut.

He picked up the speaking-tube and gave an order. Immediately they started. The gates were opened to them and they rolled through.

Hope leaned back. A deadly faintness had come over her when she heard that order. They were not going to town. The road he had mentioned led off through the sand and scrub oak across the island.

She stole a glance at Higgins in the light from the opaque globe in the roof of the car. He was sitting with head bent, his hands crossed over his stick, as oblivious to her as if she were not there.

Where were they taking her? Did she dare ask him? Was this silence and absorption habitual to him? Would Anita have broken it?

Uncertain what to do, she looked through the window and saw that they were approaching one of the loneliest spots on the island. They were going slowly, for the way was rough and the fog thick. The window-pane was blurred with rain, but she knew the locality too well to mistake it.

Her debate with herself was interrupted. Higgins had lifted the speaking-tube again and ordered the chauffeur to turn down a road even more unfrequented than the one they were traveling.

But, instead of complying, the car was stopped; there was a word or two between the valet and chauffeur, and then the valet jumped down and came round to the side.

Higgins grunted and swore.

"Can't you damn fools understand plain English?" he asked, as the valet opened the door. "What the hell you stoppin' for?"

"You've said it!" The valet pushed the muzzle of an automatic toward the old man's chest. "It's hell, and going to be for you from now on. Hands up!"

Hope gave a cry and stretched out her trembling arms. The man in the valet's oilskins was Kelsey.

CALLING to the chauffeur, who had also swung down and was now at his elbow, to keep his gun on Higgins, Kelsey sprang into the car and gathered Hope in his arms.

She fell limply against him; and, thinking that she had fainted, he laid her back against the cushions, chafing her hands and murmuring tender words.

But Hope had not lost consciousness. She was merely so thunderstruck, so overcome that she suffered a temporary suspension of her powers of mental coordination. To her, Kelsey's unexpected, incredible appearance—the fact that he was beside her, his arms about her—was surely one of the incongruous, impossible happenings of a dream.

The situation itself carried all the stigmata of a nightmare—the lonesome road, the dark, drizzly evening, the drifting, unearthly mist, herself in a nurse's dress in a car with this malevolent old man. What could it be but a confused conglomerate of former impressions and fears?

And as if to confirm the dreamlike character of the affair, on top of the valet's abrupt transformation into Kelsey, the chauffeur at the door disclosed the lean, dark face and spoke with the devil-may-care drawl of the motor-cyclist she had sent for a doctor the night before. She wondered if she were not, after all, the victim of delusions.

"What's this? What's this?" Higgins was stammering, as he recovered from his first startled amazement. "A hold-up?"

"No, you old buzzard," the motor-cyclist-chauffeur informed him, thrusting his face close to the alderman's. "It's your day of judgment. You've come to the end of your line, Bill."

Higgins still seemed unable to comprehend.

"Adolf! Bennett!" He called the names of his valet and chauffeur.

"They've sold you out, old-timer. The rats, as usual, deserted the sinking ship."

"Humph. And who are you?" He peered from one to the other with his dim-sighted eyes.

"Nobody in particular, Bill. Just Juarez Charlie and George Kelsey— Hold on there!" He interrupted the little flourish of this announcement as Higgins involuntarily dropped his hands. "Keep those hooks up above your head. Kelsey, frisk him."

He waited to see that the search was thoroughly made. No weapon was found on Higgins' person, but, still not content, Charlie himself carefully investigated the lining and cushions of the car and, as an added precaution, made the old man change places with Hope.

"I guess he's harmless for the first time," he decided finally. "But keep your gun bent on him, Kelsey. Don't take any chances with a rattlesnake. Now that we've got you, Bill, old dear, we wouldn't lose you for the world. Miss Ranger"—ceremoniously—"I suppose the order is, 'Home, James!'"

Bowing, he closed the door and, climbing back to the chauffeur's seat, turned the car round and started for the main highway. Kelsey seated himself opposite Hope and covered her hands with one of his; the other held his automatic ready for instant use.

"Hope," he murmured rapturously, "you're safe at last! You're going home. Do you realize it?"

"George! George!" Stunned by the wonder of it all, she could only grip his fingers and repeat his name.

HIGGINS, slumped down in his corner of the car, seemed to have accepted the situation. But had he been capable of mischief, Kelsey could hardly have prevented it; for he saw nothing, thought of nothing but Hope. Her breath was coming in long, broken sobs; she was trembling violently from head to foot.

"Don't try to be calm," Kelsey urged. "Let yourself go, dearest. Cry, if you can. Everything's all right now. Juarez Charlie's driving, and I am here with you."

"But how? How?" She clung to him. "He told me that you were at the old house."

"Who told you that? The old man here?"

"No, no! It was Dr. Bristow—before he was killed."

"Killed?" Kelsey cried.

"Yes. He is dead, murdered. I—I——" She shuddered and covered her face with her hands. Kelsey's first thought was that she had done it; but her next words relieved him.

"I saw it all. That Copley woman. She came in like a maniac. She is one. He tried to push her away from the door, and—" Her voice failed; she put her hand to her throat.

"Don't tell it now," said Kelsey firmly. "Try to put it out of your mind. It's over and done with."

Higgins reached out and grasped him by the knee.

"Here; let her talk," he directed harshly. He seemed to forget that he was no longer in a position to give orders. "I want to get the straight of this."

Kelsey turned frosty eyes on him.

"That'll do from you!" he snapped. "No one is interested in what you want or don't want. You're done, Higgins."

"But he's right, George." Hope sat up resolutely. "I shall feel better if I tell it."

That clear, practical brain of hers was once more proving itself superior to the weakness of the flesh. With marvelously steadied poise, and with scarcely a quaver in her voice, she went into all the details, the quickly shifting scenes of that crowded half-hour.

Higgins, leaning forward, his ear bent to catch every word, neither interrupted nor made any comment; but Kelsey was less impassive. The tale Hope was telling so simply and clearly, without dramatic emphasis, turned him sick with fright. He was appalled at the danger to which she had been exposed, the narrow margin of her chances. And when she described her battle with Anita Copley, his self-control gave way. He could only whisper passionate endearments, his eyes clouding with unashamed tears.

CHARLIE, driving steadily ahead, was turning over the information in his mind, wondering what effect, if any, this might have on their program; for Kelsey had lowered the sash between them, so that he might overhear Hope's story.

None of the three had any cause to mourn Bristow; Charlie, indeed, had never even seen him.

Yet it struck them all with a repugnant shock to hear Higgins give a wheezing chuckle at the conclusion.

"So that hell-cat finally done for him," he remarked callously. "That's what all his smoothness and eddication and God-A'mighty ways amounted to. He lets a jealous Jane bump him off with a dope-squirter. Well, good enough for him, the dirty, double-crossin' dog." He ran on, heaping abusive epithets on the dead man until Kelsey threatened to gag him if he did not shut up.

"That old ruffian's got to keep quiet," he said to Hope, under his breath. "But I can't truthfully say that I blame him a lot. Bristow was surely preparing to scuttle the Combine. By Jove, that explains, too, why, when he knew where I was, he made no attempt to get me. Lucky thing, Juarez"—he turned his head and spoke to Charlie—"that we decided to play your other hunch."

Charlie nodded, looking straight before him; to drive through a thick night requires one's undivided attention.

"What was that? The other hunch?" Hope asked curiously.

Glad to divert her thoughts, Kelsey plunged into the recital of his own adventures from the time she had left him asleep in the passageway—of his awakening to find Juarez Charlie with him; how Charlie happened to be in the house; the subsequent consultations which resulted in their sending for Morton; the difficulty they had in convincing the latter of the truth of their story, and his reluctant assent to play the spy.

Hope listened no more keenly than did Higgins. It irritated Kelsey that he had to gratify the curiosity of the old wretch, and annoyed him still more that Higgins, in spite of all this evidence piling up against him, was not more crushed. His interest actually seemed stronger than his fear.

"Keep back in your corner!" Kelsey ordered, and lowered his voice in the hope that the old man might be able to catch only a word here and there.

"After Morton had left," he went on, "I could see that Charlie was not entirely satisfied. He kept pacing the floor and muttering that it wasn't wise to put all your eggs in one basket. I was pretty well on edge, and it didn't add to my cheer. But finally, after rolling more cigarettes than he could smoke and snapping his fingers until I swore at him, he condescended to enlighten me.

" 'Kelsey,' he said, 'I'm figuring on taking a chance. Did you hear me asking your friend about the menials that are closest to the *noblesse* over at the sanatorium?'

"I had; and it provoked me that he should be fiddling around with such irrelevant details when time was so important.

"But he soon showed me that he had a reason for it. 'That chauffeur of Hobo Bill's,' he said, 'Slim Bennett, is an old acquaintance of mine, although I didn't tell friend Morton so. The dear lad would be doing time if Bill hadn't plucked him as a brand from the burning. But you can bet that Bill holds the fire under him all the time, and that must irk Slim. It strikes me, Kelsey, that it might be a good thing to hook up with Slim—dangle immunity from arrest and a bunch of jack before his eyes, and see what happens. Hang it! I can't feel sure in my bones of this Morton jasper.

I guess he's on the level and all that, but he hasn't got any more backbone than a fish-worm, and his wits'll run a temperature if a cat sneezes. Anyhow, it won't hurt to have two strings to our bow.'

"I agreed to that," Kelsey said, "but I wanted to know what sort of fellow this Bennett was. 'Can you trust him?' I asked.

"'Not the length of your eyelash,' he said. 'He'd mortgage his own mother for a toothpick. That's the reason I think we can use him.'

"Juarez thinks twice as fast as I do. I couldn't follow him. 'Use him?' I said stupidly.

"'Sure, Gorgio. All we've got to do with Slim is to convince him that ole marse has lost out. If we show him that the apple sauce is all on our side of the table, he'll be after us with his tongue out. Slip him one of these bonds and beat it into his nut that his only chance to miss the well-known river-trip is to play in with us, and he'll be one of the best little comrades you'd want.'

"'But how can you get in touch with him?' I asked. 'Are you going to take the risk of telephoning again?'

"'No; I can beat that,' he told me. 'There's a kid fooling round down there in the woods. I've seen him several times from the window. I'll get hold of him and have him carry a message. Here; give me a pencil and some paper.'

"IT STRUCK me as a risky thing to do. A note might so easily fall into the wrong hands. But when I pointed this out to him, he only laughed.

"'Nobody's going to read this,' he said, 'except the man it's intended for, unless it might be Higgins himself, and we'll have to run that risk.'

"I saw what he meant when he showed me what he had written. One could hardly call it writing at all; it was just a few criss-cross lines, with a rude drawing of a combination safe below them.

"Juarez elucidated the cryptogram for me. 'That's hobo language,' he said, 'and it tells Slim that his brother Ed is waiting to meet him along this road. Ed is a yegg peterman—that's a safe-blower—and that picture of a safe down there is his monniker. It's a pitch that will bring Slim sure.'

"He sneaked out then and found the boy, gave him a dollar to carry the note, and came back to wait. It wasn't more than an hour afterward that we saw Bennett coming down the road. Charlie let him pass, and then, by making a quick détour through the woods, intercepted him.

"He was gone so long that I was about to start after him, thinking that he might have some ugly trouble on his hands; but just then he came back as shining as a May morning.

"'Hoot, laddie!' he cried. 'That's the brawest little hunch I ever kenned. Slim fell on my neck and wept happy tears when I crossed his palm with a bond. He tells me that he is just on the ragged edge of mutiny. He's a specialist, and he doesn't like to be asked to do odd jobs. The valet, Adolf, he says, is also suffering from a bad case of the shakes. Adolf, it seems, was all of a twitter this afternoon, and tipped Slim off that there was a big ruckus on between the three heads. From what he gathered by the keyhole route, the bottom is dropping out of all their plans. Also, Adolf learns that Higgins is fixing to stage a fatal automobile accident to-night, which, of course, would have to be handled by himself and Slim; and the prospect of taking a chance on the chair doesn't appeal violently to either of them.'

"Then, without any warning of what was coming, Charlie shot at me, 'I've arranged for you and me to take their places to-night.'

"Nothing could have suited me better. We were going to do something at last. We had to wait a while, and time never dragged so slowly. But at last we set out, and made our way with all caution to the outside of the sanatorium grounds.

"We didn't know but that we were walking into the lion's mouth. However, that possibility had to take care of itself. We weren't going to fail. And everything went right. The two men met us as Slim had arranged, guided us by a back path to the garage, changed clothes with us and gave us each a revolver. So here we are."

Before Hope could speak, Higgins lurched toward Kelsey.

"Gag me if you want to!" he burst out. "But I'm going to say that Bristow was the damnedest jackass muddler that I've ever trained with, and I've had a many. I told that blank fool a dozen times that he ought to croak you two, and he wouldn't listen to me. Now see where it's got him to!"

"Thanks for them kind words, Bill," Charlie slowed down to call over his shoulder. "You always were ready to reward any one who did good work against you by railroading 'em into heaven. Approbation from Sir Hubert Stanley, as I read somewhere once, is praise indeed."

He waited for a rumbling stream of curses and abuse from Higgins, but none came. Charlie wagged a puzzled head and drove faster. They were on the highway now.

"I don't like the way the old grapefruit is acting," he muttered. "He's taking it altogether too darned easy."

THE straggling procession of Main Streets which is the Merrick Road was almost ended; that ribbon of macadam and oyster-shell, with one village shirred on to another as it follows the windings of the South Shore, was about to fray out into the asphalt threads of the city.

The night was shrouded in mist and fog; the trees dripped dismally; the road-lights were mere opaque globules in a world of gloom. The tires of the limousine, instead of gripping the roadway, spattered through puddles and constantly threatened to skid. Crouched over the wheel in his hooded oilskins, his gargoyle profile thrust forward as he peered into the murk ahead, Charlie was like some schooner captain navigating in uncertain waters. All his attention was given to the car; yet he did not forget from time to time to cast a vigilant glance over his shoulder to make sure that Higgins was not, as he put it to himself, starting something.

He could not shake off that ominous sense of impending trouble. Lady Luck was certain to offset her favors by some equalizing slap, and he bent his wits to speculating what form it would take on the chance of averting it.

A smash-up? That might easily happen on such a night as this, at the pace they were traveling. What advantage to rescue Lorry's daughter if she were killed or maimed through his recklessness? And at the picture, he would involuntarily slow up.

Then he would ask himself how he dared moderate his speed. How did he know that Anita Copley had not regained her liberty? It was extremely likely that Hope, in her excitement, had tied a bungling knot or that somebody had found the woman and released her. And this nurse, according to all accounts, was a person to be reckoned with.

Also, why was Higgins so submissive? Was this apparent escape merely a frame-up contrived by that cunning old brain, with Adolf and Bennett only pretending to sell out, so as to have them waylaid on the road and wipe the slate clean—kill three birds with one stone, as it were? It seemed a wild conjecture, and yet it was just the sort of trap that the crafty old wretch might devise.

So at each lonely patch of road or possible spot of ambush, Charlie would crouch low and send the car shooting ahead, half-expecting to be plugged by a bullet. At last he drew a long breath of relief.

"Jamaica!" He pointed to a hillside ahead, with scattered lights over it, as he turned back to Hope and Kelsey. "I'm going to stop here and telephone. And you'd better gag William the Silent there and sit on him while I'm about it. We don't want to attract such attention as he'd love to create if he had half a chance."

"I'll look after him," Kelsey responded grimly.

He expected some protest from the arrogant old man; but Higgins evidently regarded it as the fortunes of war, and offered no resistance as Kelsey improvised a strait-jacket of his rubber coat, slipping its hood over the face in such a way as to muffle any outcry.

The proceeding was just concluded when they splashed over a bridge and trundled decorously into the town.

Choosing an inconspicuous place to stop beyond the Peace Monument, Charlie drew up to the curb and hurried into a drug store.

After an interval, he reappeared, much of his customary jauntiness restored.

"Gum?" He tossed a package of it back to Kelsey. "You can give friend Willie a stick of it when his jaws are in commission again. Aids digestion, the wrapper says. Maybe it'll help him to swallow his bitter pill."

Kelsey swept aside the offering.

"Did you get Mr. Ranger?" he asked.

"Less use of names," Charlie admonished, with a hasty glance around.

"Well, did you get him?"

"Nope." Charlie was still impishly reticent. "I didn't try. Too temperamental."

"But you telephoned to some one, didn't you?"

"Refuse to answer. Might tend to incriminate or degrade me if it was known I'd been talking to a lawyer. You can draw your own conclusion; though, when I tell you I was exchanging a few remarks with a party whose name begins with H. That might stand for Hennessy."

"Or Higby," suggested Hope.

"Also Harding, Hughes and Hoover." Charlie grinned.

Kelsey knew there was no use trying to argue with Charlie when he was in one of these moods.

"All right," he said huffily. "But you can at least tell us what your Mr. H. had to say."

"Presently." Charlie was back in his seat again. "We've got to be on our way now."

But when he attempted to drive on, the starter wouldn't work. For several minutes he fussed with it, following various suggestions from Kelsey and Hope; but it was plainly out of order, and he was anxious to avoid further delay. Already one or two passers-by had paused to watch his unavailing efforts; a crowd would soon be collecting.

Muttering anathemas on the balky device, Charlie clambered down again and went to the front of the car to crank up.

HIS experiences at cranking had been hitherto confined to flivvers. He did not reckon on the superior horse-power of the limousine. On the second revolution, the engine back-fired, hurling him into the middle of the street. He picked himself out of the mud and ran toward Kelsey, who was half-way out of the door of the car.

"Get back in there!" he hissed. "Your job is to watch that old roustabout."

All his debonair complacency had vanished. He stood beside the running-board, his face twisted with pain, gingerly holding his right arm.

"Not so good," he groaned. "I knew it. Lady Luck slapped me—slapped me on the wrist. We're laid up. Crazy to try and drive with one hand a night like this!"

Kelsey, who had been examining the arm, looked grave.

"I'm afraid there's a fracture, old man—the first and second bones of the carpus. I'll step into the drug store and get some splints and a roll of bandage; and at the same time find out where we can get a chauffeur."

"No strange chauffeurs," Charlie demurred stubbornly. "I'll just have to do the best I can, and——"

A sudden throbbing of the engine interrupted him. Unnoticed by either of the men, Hope had slipped past them and run to the front of the car. She grasped the crank which had proved so vicious to Charlie, and with a deft turn or two had caught the spark. Now she came back.

"I'll drive the rest of the way to town," she said. "We'll get along perfectly. You, Mr. Juarez Charlie, had better look up a doctor and come on by train."

"Shucks!" Charlie made light of his injury. "They'd never speak to me on the road again if they knew I'd reneged for a little love-tap like this."

He had taken out his handkerchief for a sling and was knotting it with his teeth, disdaining Kelsey's assistance.

"Quit your arguing, both of you." He took his seat beside Hope in front. "Let's go."

With the car once more in motion and the difficulty apparently smoothed away, Charlie began to talk of his own accord.

"I rahtheh fawncy I gave old Higby as much of a jolt as that darned engine gave me," he observed, turning about to include Kelsey in the conversation. " 'Hello! Hello!' I said. 'This is Juarez Charlie talking.' 'Oh?' he came back, with the glad surprise of one who has found a lead quarter in his change. 'In trouble again?'

" 'Not exactly trouble,' I answered; 'but something I think Loring should know about. Have him and Mrs. Ranger meet me at the town house in about an hour, will you?'

"Dear Eustace froze up so stiff that the wire had icicles on it. It was his duty to protect Ranger, he told me, and he certainly was not going to drag him into town on my mere say-so. There had been too much giving way to me as it was. If I had any information, I could give it to him and he would decide what measures to take.

" 'Well,' I said, very small and humble-like, 'I'm on my way to town with Hope, and I had an idea that her father might like to see her. But, of course, if you think——'

"Lord! I could hear the plaster fall as he went through the ceiling. 'What's that?' he yelled. You could almost get it without any telephone. 'You've got Hope?'

" 'I have,' I said, still in my modest-violet voice. 'I thought it might be nice to have her father and mother on hand to welcome her. And, by the way,' I added, 'you can also have Inspector Bailey and a couple of cops among those present. I've got the head of the Combine with me, too, and——' "

"Whoa there, sister!" He stopped to give a direction to Hope. "We keep straight ahead here."

They were out of Jamaica now, and she had swerved to the right on Queens Boulevard as the most direct route to town.

"But why?" she glanced at him inquiringly. "Aren't we going in over the Queensboro Bridge?"

"Not this trip," he chuckled, and squared about so as to address himself especially to Higgins, who by this time had been relieved of his mufflings.

"You see, Bill," kindly, "if you're counting on any one having listened in on my talk to Higby, you're going to be fooled."

Their prisoner roused up at this and bent forward.

"How's that?"

"Why, Higby, of course, wanted to know just where I was, and how long before I'd arrive, and how I was coming, and all that. So, just to be on the safe side, I am doing exactly the opposite of what I told him. There might have been a reception committee of your young men awaiting us with a salute of twenty guns. Disappointed, eh? Have I made a mistake?"—as Higgins, with a groan, sank back in the corner of the car, abject and shaking.

He hardly stirred again; but all the way through Brooklyn lay in that state of collapse, one arm hanging limply out of the window.

And now the sky-scrapers of Manhattan loomed before them across the river. Soon they were over the Williamsburg Bridge, and, through the East Side streets Hope drove toward Fifth Avenue.

Spying the green lights of a police station, Kelsey called Charlie's attention to them.

"Let's get rid of our passenger," he proposed. "We don't want to spoil the homecoming with him."

"Good Lord!" Charlie spoke irritably. "That's the one thing that's been goose-fleshing me all the way—the fear that we might fall into the hands of the bulls. Figure it for yourself. Lieutenant at desk looks up. 'Why, Alderman Higgins, what's this?' They all know him.

" 'I've had an awful time, Lieutenant,' says Bill. 'These three lunatics captured me by a trick and have been dragging me all over Long Island. The woman thinks she's the missing Hope Ranger.' What's the result? We three are locked up. Bill calls a taxi and rides away. In the course of two or three hours, things are straightened out? Maybe. Again, maybe not. Bill is a power. It might be that he could have us quietly spirited off to another private booby-hatch, and nobody the wiser. Anyhow, Bill, with a three hours' start on us, would be off and gone to the races. No, little one"—to Hope—"whenever you see those emerald lamps, sheer off like it was a danger-signal and——"

He gave a convulsive start and stared over Hope's shoulder into the mirror at the side of the wind-shield.

"My God!" He whirled on Kelsey. "What are you doing back there? Can't you see the old devil is playing 'possum on you? He's been signaling out of the window with his hand. Didn't make any difference to him which way we came. He can raise a bunch of gunmen in any part of town. Look back and see if there's any one after us."

BUT before Kelsey could do so, Hope, whose eyes were on the mirror, gave a startled cry.

"There's a touring car full of men just turned in from Rivington Street!"

Charlie swerved back to her.

"That's them!" his voice rang shrill. "Step on her, sister; step on her! Give her all the gas you've got!"

Hope threw the gears into high and shot the limousine ahead. The car behind also increased its pace. She circled two or three blocks in the effort to lose it; but always when the hope rose that it had been shaken off, it reappeared, never further than a corner or two back.

Finally, at Charlie's suggestion, she straightened out to a direct course.

"It's got to be a race," he said, "and I'd rather take my chances in your country than in theirs. Maybe, if we can outrun them as far as Thirty-fourth Street, they'll lay off. Beat it for Fifth Avenue and up-town. And give 'em all you've got."

She took him at his word. Her foot grinding down on the accelerator, both hands gripping the wheel, her lips drawn back over her clenched teeth, she tore across town, heedless of slippery pavements, sharp corners, car-tracks, obstacles or obstructions. A blow-out meant a funeral, anything in her path, destruction. But her nerve was as sure as her driving.

At Lafayette Street she just shaved the front of a heavy truck and crowed jubilantly as a wave of profanity from its driver swirled behind them.

IN THE empty cañon of lower Broadway the pursuing car was pressing them close. Its driver was taking the same suicidal chances as she. But she corkscrewed in between the headlights of an up-bound and a down-bound street-car and gained the length of a block.

Charlie's none too timorous heart was in his mouth a dozen times. But the invulnerability which attends utter recklessness was hers. It was one of those things which we say could not occur—this race at a subway-express speed between two cars through the narrow, cluttered ways of the wholesale section—this flight and pursuit, this underworld attempt to rescue the brains of their system. The police would have stopped it; the entire district would have been roused.

Yet it swept a roaring menace through that huddled region of tenement-houses and granite business buildings, unchecked and unretarded.

Still keeping the lead, Hope twisted and turned through two or three more streets at the same mad pace and then, skidding round a corner, came to Washington Square.

Here, with belated deference to the traffic-regulations, she slowed down and at a more normal rate followed the driveway.

Charlie, craning out and looking back, could see no sign of the gangsters.

"I believe we've lost 'em," he announced optimistically. Then, as they swept under the arch, he jerked back, "No; here they come!"

Hope came down once more on the accelerator and gave herself, hand, foot, eye and soul, to the demand for speed.

A straight stretch of level asphalt for the deciding brush, practically clear this rainy night of other vehicles except for a lumbering stage or two. It was about half-past ten, the zero hour of pre-midnight traffic.

Charlie leaned forward and read the indicator as they continued to gather momentum.

"Fifty!" he announced, as they jumped the car-tracks at Fourteenth Street, and shouted in Hope's ear, "Faster!"

The spectacle of two motors racing up the avenue really attracted surprisingly little notice. One or two of the pedestrians on the sidewalk turned to watch and gave a disapproving shake of the head. Twenty-third Street was crossed without accident.

"Sixty!" Charlie read the indicator.

It was the best that Hope could do. She knew that.

Steadily, surely, the gunmen's car was creeping up. The distance between them was now less than two blocks.

By the time they had reached the Waldorf, the touring car was so close that she could see the reflected figures of its six or eight occupants, the white of their faces under their down-drawn caps.

As she came abreast of the Library, the colored moons of the traffic tower at Forty-second Street flashed from yellow to red to green. She had lost the right of way. All over now! It would be madness to think of trying to dart through that close-locked line of cross-town travel.

Charlie had a sudden inspiration.

"Feel in Higgins's upper left-hand vest pocket," he shouted back to Kelsey, "and see if he hasn't got a police card!"

Quick to catch the cue, Kelsey leaped at Higgins, and, rifling him, thrust two or three square bits of pasteboard through the front window.

Shuffling them rapidly, Charlie sang out in triumph.

"I've got it! Keep on moving, sister."

He held it out to show the signature of the police commissioner as an angry traffic-cop came bellowing toward them, and, as if by magic, the way opened.

Safe on the other side, Charlie looked back to see the touring car with its load of killers stayed and held up by the moving dam.

"And now for home!" breathed Hope.

"No; this way out!" Charlie waved imperatively to the left on Forty-fourth Street. "Don't think that Bill's Sunday-school class will lay down as easy as that. I'll bet that the telephone-wires are buzzing right now to the up-town bunch. There'll be a gang at either end of the block where your father lives, waiting for us. I'm going to take you to some people I know on the West Side until I'm sure of a clear track."

So, under his direction, Hope drove to the apartment on Central Park West which housed the Greenbergs.

Mr. and Mrs. Greenberg, the princess and Miss McCarthy, the ladies in gay evening wraps, were disappearing through the doors while Mr. Leffler was holding a light to the cigarette of Mr. Dave Greenberg, who was just about to drive the family car to the garage.

"Greenberg! Wait!" Charlie hailed, and jumping from the limousine as Hope drew up, rushed toward the two men.

"Listen fast, boys," he said. "We've got Hope Ranger here, and want your 'bus to get her home. Greenberg, you drive us. There's a crowd of gunmen after us. Leffler, are you game to scoot our car four or five blocks away, anywhere, and leave it?"

FOR the rest of his life, Charlie retained an inordinate respect for those two young men. They took the situation standing. No running round in circles of excitement. No fool questions. They had been in the war, and understood the value of quick thinking and immediate action in a surprise attack. They spoke in one joyous breath, and with brevity.

"Sure!" said Mr. Leffler.

"Get in!" said Mr. Greenberg.

Hope, who was close behind Charlie, sprang into the Greenberg car, and Charlie and Kelsey, aided by Mr. Leffler, dragged out Higgins, a dead weight on their hands, and hustled him in after her. Kelsey followed, and Charlie scrambled up beside the driver.

With his still unlighted cigarette hanging from his lips, Dave Greenberg drove through the dim width of the park, Charlie leaning from his seat at a perilous angle, his head twisted, watching for a piratical craft to show up. But no wicked lights appeared. It looked at last as if their persistent jinx of accident and incident had abandoned them.

Half-way across, Higgins stretched out his hand and clawed at Charlie's arm.

"A hundred and fifty thousand apiece if you let me go."

"Why, Bill"—Charlie spoke in pained surprise—"you're a piker after all. Our price is just double whatever you've got."

Greenberg swung into Fifth Avenue, and Charlie drew his first long breath since they had started.

Also, for the first time in his adventurous career, he felt a warm, emotional regard for the police.

They were sprinkled up and down the thoroughfare, guarding it for several blocks from the Ranger home.

The long strain was over for all of them. Kelsey, sitting beside Hope, felt a vast relief and at the same time an infinite sadness. He was holding her hand tightly clasped in his, and yet he felt that she was already far from him. She was no longer forlorn, turning to him for aid and solace.

The curtain was falling and his heart ached. She was safe among those who loved her, a great heiress slipping into another world than his. He was an unknown, poor young man.

Already the car was drawing toward the sidewalk.

"I want to say good-by before you reach home." His voice was shaky.

She loved him; so immediately she divined his trouble.

"George!" She looked at him with a quaintly mischievous smile. "I didn't know you were shy. Are you afraid of my father and mother?"

It hurt, that light tone.

"The adventure's over," he said, stoically calm. "I couldn't take advantage of your—your——"

Her lips brushed his cheek.

"Our adventure is just beginning," she murmured. "A beautiful one, this time."

THE END

The Wife Triumphant

One of the Oldest but Still the Most Popular of Games Is "Putting Husband in His Place." It May Be Played with Direful Results; but There Are Other Possible Endings—as Shown Here

By Marion Strobel

SHE dipped her fountain pen into the red ink and opening her diary, to Thursday, March 17th, wrote, "It shall be done."

Whereupon she rose, jammed a cerise hat on at an angle entirely obscuring the right eye, ran a lip-stick abandonly across her mouth, put a dab of Dorine upon her nose, and, with a hasty glance at her chic diminutiveness reflected in the mirror, flung herself out of her bedroom, down the stairs and into the waiting taxi.

"I want you to go to the Algonquin Hotel, and I'm in a great, great hurry."

"Yes, ma'am," answered the driver, mindful of his training, though he wished to say: "Child, you have too much straw-colored hair flying about. And your hat is indecently covering your eye. And your lips are painted. And if you were my Marigold, I would not so much as let you out of my sight."

Nevertheless, he drove as rapidly as policemen and traffic would let him, while she sat bolt upright in the exact center of the cab. One of her hands clasped the other, and were it not for her youth and the joyous tilt of her features, she might have looked tragic. She felt tragic, and like a Trojan woman and like Anna Karenina and like the poor little rich girl and, most of all, like slapping John's face. John was her husband.

She got out of the cab and entered the Algonquin Hotel. She had never been there before, and the strangeness of it increased her determination. She jerked her cerise hat still further over her right eye and marched up to the desk. And, though the desk clerk was young, and had blond curly hair and peery blue eyes, he did not deter her. She spoke loud, distinctly, and with sustained breath.

"Mr. Payson S. Clark is staying at this hotel. Kindly tell him Mrs. Milton is here."

And the desk clerk, in turn mindful of his training, but wishing, the while, that he might say, "Oh, my dear child, go home to your husband, or let me tell you that you are lovely—lovely as a Greuze painting," answered,

"Mr. Clark will be right down."

She nodded her gratification, and, turning, walked over to one of the blue-plush sofas.

As she sat down, the elevator door opened and Mr. Clark emerged smiling.

"Mrs. Milton! I kept hoping I'd get a message from you—up till six o'clock I thought there was a chance. Then I decided you hadn't the nerve——"

"I haven't," she interrupted. "But I'm going to do it anyway."

And the desk clerk, who was watching them, couldn't make out the situation at all. Why was this Mrs. Milton of the piquant features and bewildering clothes—why was this charming lady looking so serious? And what had it all to do with Mr. Payson S. Clark, feature-writer of a New York paper? He had always considered Mr. Clark a hard-working young man—to be sure, he sat at the weekly round table with other members of the intelligensia while they ate frugally and talked voraciously. Still, talk was harmless enough. And he had never before been seen in the company of a woman. He was not of the variety that the desk clerk termed "tea-toilers." And, then, Mrs. Milton looked so excited, and—yes—a little frightened. It was obvious she was doing something that she shouldn't be doing. And Mr. Clark was smiling. If only she hadn't been *Mrs.* Milton! After all, in spite of her guileless appearance, she had a husband.

Perhaps, if the desk clerk had been nearer, he would have felt reassured. Perhaps not. For Mrs. Milton was at the moment saying:

"He wouldn't switch his trunk round into my lap for peanuts, would he? Of course I love an elephant. But I'm scared to death of his trunk—it's so much more alive than any other part of him."

"Oh, no; he won't do that."

"Well then, it's settled. And I'll be there to-morrow night. You are really a dear and are helping me a lot." Here she shook hands with Mr. Clark, and looked up at him gratefully, and as directly as her hat would allow.

"And you are helping me, Mrs. Milton," answered Mr. Clark, and, as he accompanied her to the door, he added, "Until to-morrow, then——"

"I will be there," she replied, and this, overheard by the desk clerk, convinced him that she was pledging her word to something.

And, indeed, she was.

IN FACT, all the way home in the taxi, and even after she was back in her bedroom, she kept repeating, "I will be there."

And later, as she was dressing for dinner, she amplified this with:

"Yes; I *will* be there, but that doesn't help me to-night. And you might as well know, Fritzie Stephens Milton, that a *tête-à-tête* with one's husband either is or it isn't. And to-night will be an 'isn't.'" Whereupon she smiled at her reflection in the mirror—as what woman would not, were she wearing a Paquin tea-gown? She always enjoyed conversations with her mirrored reflection; it was such fun to see how her face acted when she talked.

"He'll be wild—simply wild," she crooned gaily, as she turned off the lights and, leaving her darkened room, descended the stairs.

Her husband was standing in the hall, waiting for her. To all outward appearance he was a satisfactory husband—young, good-looking, well dressed and obviously eager to see his wife—still, as one woman remarked: "You never can tell. Of course John Lee Milton is good-looking—a little too good-looking, if you know what I mean." The implication was sinister.

"How have you been, Fritzie?" He approached and took his wife's hand affectionately. "You aren't still angry, dear child, are you?"

"Not in the least, John," she replied, as she removed her hand and led the way into the dining-room. "Why should I be angry?"

She was sitting opposite him now, and the candle-light and her cream-colored tea-gown and the entire charming intimacy of the scene justified his asking,

"Why, indeed?" He smiled and added, "Then everything is all right." And, wishing, no doubt, to make everything a little more all right, he proceeded to tell her just why he did not want her to dance for the starving orphans of India. She was to understand it wasn't the orphans he objected to—he was quite as distressed as she over their plight—nor was he a man to shout about charity starting at home; charity should be encouraged irrespective of location. No; the reason he did not wish her to dance was because her partner would be J. Caldwalder Towne, and J. Cally Towne was the most notorious cad in the city, and any woman in his company was not only conspicuous but questionable, and "if you, my dear Fritzie, were not such an infant, you would probably have heard stories which would make the idea of dancing with Cally abhorrent to you."

Now, Fritzie, though somewhat of an infant, had heard most, if not all, of the stories, and she couldn't see that they affected Mr. Towne's dancing. Mr. Towne was, indeed, the most accomplished master of intricate steps that she knew, and for some reason she enjoyed dancing with him and all his wickedness—more than had he been a high-school boy.

"I wonder if Mr. Towne ever supposed

his sins would reach the orphans of India," she mused. "Sin is far-reaching, isn't it? Like—like an elephant's trunk." And again she felt tragic, and like a Trojan woman and like Anna Karenina and like the poor little rich girl and, most of all, like slapping John's face—for this was the first year of their marriage and he was telling her what she should and should not do. Truly, marriage was a snare and a delusion, and she was forced to ride elephants.

According to her "line a day," the rest of the evening was stupid. "I said I had a headache and was going to bed, and he said he had to work. And, O dear Lord, marriage is a dried apple!"

She didn't look ill, certainly—this, in spite of the fact that she had powder all over her face. No; she looked as a bride breakfasting in bed should look—laces and ribbons and baby-pillows, a rose-colored comforter, and sunlight falling directly on the white-enameled tray. But the breakfast on the tray was untasted—she was ill.

"Are you sure you don't want me to send for the doctor?"

"No, John; I don't. My head aches, and I didn't sleep, and I want to be left alone. Please call up the Stevensons and say I sha'n't be able to go to the circus to-night."

"Then I sha'n't go, either."

She didn't answer at once. She closed her eyes, and John, mistaking this for an evidence that she wished to sleep, started to leave the room. She waited until he had reached the threshold and then she opened her eyes; she hoped she was transfixing him with her eyes—she had frequently read that it could be done.

"If you don't go to the circus," she said, "I shall have hysterics and die."

Which announcement would have disturbed most husbands. To John, in the first year of his marriage, it was shocking. He had never considered the mortality of Fritzie before. And as it was the first time Fritzie herself had considered it, she felt suddenly apprehensive and very sorry for herself. The fact that John was looking worried, and as though he were trying to act while there was yet time, did not reassure her. After all, she might as well die. Perhaps she would die. Perhaps she would be killed. As John, in the soothing tone used to placate squawking babies, promised her to go to the circus, she felt convinced that she would be killed. And they would carry her, all crushed from the hoof of the elephant, and lay her on the bed—as she was now. Her face would be even whiter, and there would be sawdust in her hair, and her hands would be crossed, and the moon would throw "warm gules upon her breast."

Long after John had left, she was still engrossed in this contemplation. In fact, she would probably have continued it indefinitely had she not abruptly realized that she was very hungry. She was accustomed to an egg, coffee and rolls, and she had had nothing.

Forty minutes later she was at the Belmont ordering a luncheon which started with ripe olives, celery and nuts, and wandered up through oysters to cold meat and salad, and down again to a chocolate-marshmallow sundae and a demitasse. After which meal she felt confident of her beauty and her ability to handle any situation.

She was the wife triumphant.

She took a four-mile walk, and at five o'clock she was back in bed reading a motion-picture magazine and eating marrons glacés. When John at five-thirty tiptoed into the room, she was ostensibly asleep.

MADISON GARDENS, the temporary home of the circus, was already filling up. Noise—children with sticky hands—parents with resigned faces—clowns—laughter—shouting of: "Peanuts! Popcorn!" and noise.

To Fritzie, it was terrifying.

"I'd forgotten it was so big—and so everything all at once with a bang," she said, as she shook hands with Mr. Clark.

"It is big." He smiled reassuringly. "You don't want to back out?"

"I should think not!" she answered emphatically, and she was more frightened than ever.

"What's his name?"

"Whose name?"

"My elephant's."

"Oh!" And Mr. Clark laughed. "That's stupid of me. I forgot to find out."

"I do want to know his name. And I want to buy him some peanuts."

"I've thought of that, at least," answered

Mr. Clark, pulling two bags from his pocket.

She thanked him, and thought he was very nice and courteous and pleasant-looking. And he was so interested in the relief committee for the orphans of India. He had attended all the meetings of the relief committee. She felt that she knew him quite well.

"Do you know, Mr. Clark," she said confidentially, as they cut across the end ring, "this is the first time I've done anything like this. I mean, everything I've done before I was told how to do. So if there is anything I should know, I wish you'd tell me."

"No; there is nothing I can tell you," he answered briefly. "But were I your husband, my dear young lady—" He did not finish. Mr. Clark was wont to discipline even his imagination.

HE LEFT her behind the scenes at the north end of the gardens. "I'll be back directly," he had said, and she hoped he wouldn't be long.

She felt the "gone" sensation that she, as a little girl, had experienced when falling from a trapeze. It was a very unpleasant feeling.

And she wished the clowns wouldn't look at her. Their stare was worse than that of an ordinary person. It was a bigger stare, and more unblinking. You couldn't somehow stare back, stare them out of countenance—for their faces weren't really their own. She wondered whether she looked funny to them.

And she wondered, too, whether she could possibly get out and take a taxi, and race home and run up to her room and hide under the bedclothes. She dismissed the temptation. After all, she was the wife triumphant. And just as she was repeating this knowledge to herself, she saw Mr. Clark returning. He was accompanied by a large red-faced man with a dark suit and a white tie.

The red-faced man beamed upon her, gave her a large, warm, moist hand, asked her to come with him, and led her round brightly painted chariots and up dingy stairs to a dimly lit platform.

"If you'll come into this dressing-room—" He smiled, knocking on a door at the right.

A maid opened the door, and, seeing who it was, stepped back hospitably. In doing so, she disclosed a girl curled up on a Morris chair. The girl was wearing a pink-velvet wrapper, and her hair was down.

"I hope we didn't disturb you, Baroness. This is Mrs. Milton, and she is going to ride the elephant. Please see that she gets the right clothes."

The girl smiled a languid assent, and the red-faced man withdrew, closing the door behind him and leaving Fritzie unpleasantly bewildered. She didn't understand why she had been brought to the dressing-room, or why she had to change her clothes, or what a baroness was doing there, anyway.

"What a duck of a dressing-room—" she began, feeling that she should say something. She looked first at the walls—almost entirely hidden by costumes, clothing and magazine covers—and then at the furniture—two stiff-backed chairs, the Morris chair, and a dressing-table. This was made up of pink frills and ribbons, and cluttered with rouge, lip-sticks, powder and brushes. She turned back toward the girl. "Is it fun to ride an elephant?" The girl shook her head.

"Oh, I've never done it." After all, baronesses didn't ride elephants. "Terry, show Mrs. Milton her costume," continued the girl.

And, Terry, the maid, obligingly held up a pair of bright-green trousers, a crimson coat embroidered in gold and a gilded crown.

"Oh!" said Fritzie, trying to imagine herself in bright-green trousers and a crimson coat. She got as far as thinking that the dark-blue serge dress and black tricorn hat she was wearing were very somber when the girl interrupted.

"Just hang your things on that nail beside my costume."

"Oh—then you are in it?"

The girl smiled in her amused, ever so slightly patronizing way.

"I am the acrobatic feature," she answered. "When I perform, there is no one else in the rings."

"Oh!" said Fritzie again.

Five minutes later she emerged from the dressing-room. She felt a fool. But the girl, still reclining in the Morris chair, said that she looked really very well and that she had better hurry. So she emerged with her green trousers, crimson coat, gilded crown and painted face—feeling a fool.

And the first thing she saw as she descended the stairs was an elephant. It was as though he were waiting for her at the foot of the stairs. He was large, and he blinked his eye at her. Beside him stood the red-faced man.

"He's yours," smiled the red-faced man, pointing to the elephant with one hand and beckoning to her with the other. "He's the biggest one, you see."

She had, till then, not noticed the others. They were standing to one side—three of them. They looked like very nice elephants—sleepy elephants. She liked the camels, too.

"You climb up this ladder and get right into the howdah."

"Oh, is that funny thing you ride in called a howdah? Where did it get that name? Do tell me."

But the red-faced man said he didn't know how it got the name, and that she had better not lose any time, as they wanted to take her picture and the parade was ready to start.

She walked at once over to the elephant.

"Please don't be ferocious," she said in a whisper. "I have two packages of peanuts for you."

And without more delay, her knees trembling, she climbed the ladder.

Once on top, and after the flash-light was taken, she felt an unexpected exaltation. Nothing could stop her now. She was there! She was on top of the elephant. They had a picture of her on top of the elephant. The seat of the howdah tipped, and she felt that she would be thrown out, and the elephant waved his ears, and she'd probably be killed—but she was there!

Just before the curtains parted for the parade to start, she remembered to shout down to the red-faced man,

"What's his name?"

"Rommie," he replied.

"Short for Romance," she laughed back, as the music started and the parade began.

Long before they had reached the turn, she had picked out the Stevenson box. She had forgotten her fear of Rommie—she thought his swaying gait comfortable—and she continued to smile at the crowds of faces, but all she was conscious of was the Stevenson box. She wondered what John would do when he saw her—whether he'd make a scene, grab Rommie by the trunk, or whether he'd wait till they got home and then beg her pardon properly. Either outcome would be satisfying and pleasant—very pleasant, she thought, as they approached nearer and she was able to distinguish John. He was talking to Mrs. Stevenson and gesticulating. He always gesticulated when he was interested in the conversation.

Yes; he seemed very much interested. And she was leaning toward him in that way she had.

JUST as Rommie reached the turn, John laughed; he was enjoying himself hugely. While she, his wife, was supposedly ill in bed, he was flirting with Mrs. Stevenson—and enjoying himself! And, as he laughed, he glanced up at Fritzie. He glanced up and then began to applaud. They all applauded. They were applauding the passing parade. Not one of them had recognized her.

She didn't remember very clearly after that. Rommie continued his swaying gait till they had gotten behind the scenes again. The red-faced man helped her down the ladder. She changed from her regal costume to her serge dress and tricorn hat. She told the girl—still in the Morris chair and wearing the pink wrapper—that she had loved the ride. She thanked the girl and descended the stairs. Mr. Clark was waiting for her.

"You were a knock-out," he said fatuously. "Look!" And he held forth the photograph. "It couldn't be better of you. I'll run it in to-morrow's paper." He went on and on—how the picture would advertise the Orphans of India entertainment. "They'll make him look like a white elephant—the sacred elephant of India. The sacred elephant ridden by Mrs. John Lee Milton! Mrs. Milton as the grand mogul—it couldn't be better!" And, besides, they could use the picture for posters.

She assented, of course—and smiled. She smiled endlessly—and endlessly asked questions. She even simulated interest when, at last, as they were making their way out, she saw a girl acrobat—a girl hanging by one arm from a rope high up in the ceiling and swinging her body round and round and round. Mr. Clark told her it was the girl in whose room she had dressed

—the girl they called the "baroness"—the idol of the circus. The frail and cultured girl——

She was in a taxi at last. Alone. She tried to think, but she couldn't. She shrank into a corner and cried. She no longer felt tragic. She *was* tragic.

And when she was at last back in her room, she threw herself upon her bed in a climax of grief.

John found her there an hour later. She hadn't heard him come in. She was at the moment wondering whether she should pack a few things and go to some hotel for the night. She had read of women doing that.

And then, in the morning, she could sue for a divorce.

"Why, Fritzie, my dear, what is it?"

She sat up abruptly, her tricorn hat losing its last hatpin and rolling to the floor.

She looked him up and down slowly, and when she spoke, it was with even precision.

"I have been riding an elephant in the circus," she said. "I did it for the starving orphans of India. It is hardly necessary to add that I saw you and Mrs. Stevenson."

"But, Fritzie——"

"Please! I think we need not discuss it. I will give you a divorce."

She climbed down from the bed, and, rescuing her hat, put it on her head.

"If you will kindly let me pass—" she said as she advanced toward him. And, as he did not move, she repeated, "If you will kindly let me pass—" But he still remained with his back toward the door, looking at her. "Very well, then," she came closer. "Perhaps I have not made myself clear. I have ridden an elephant in the circus. I admit it is a more questionable and more conspicuous thing to do than dancing with Cally Towne, but, nevertheless, I have done it. You can easily get a divorce. If you don't, I will. I wonder if you happen to know that Mrs. Stevenson is old enough to be your mother." She paused and came still closer, "Now, kindly let me pass."

But he didn't move. And he started to laugh.

"Fritzie, darling, darling child!"

"Oh, you—" She stopped helplessly, and then suddenly flushed, clenched her fist and hit him as hard as she could. And the hard edge of his vest button hurt her. She hit him again. "You let me out of here! Oh, you—" Her voice rose higher and higher—broke.

And now that she had started crying again, she didn't think she'd ever stop. Anyway, his arms were round her and she couldn't get out. So she repeated everything. And even now she couldn't see what right he had to forbid her dancing with Cally—there had been no "obey" in the wedding-service, and she loved orphans so. And, of course, riding an elephant was worse than dancing with Cally. She knew that when Mr. Clark suggested it as a publicity stunt—oh, she knew it quite well. That was why she had done it. And, of course, for the orphans, too. She had been scared to death. And she had had nothing to eat since luncheon except marrons glacés and peanuts.

AN HOUR later, at nearly one A.M., the desk clerk of the Algonquin became very much agitated. For coming toward him, with her cerise hat at an angle obscuring the right eye, was Mrs. Milton.

"If Mr. Clark comes in, tell him that Mr. and Mrs. Milton are having supper and would be glad to have him join them."

And though the desk clerk assented politely, his mind and his eyes were busy scrutinizing the man—the husband. Yes; he was good-looking, and he seemed eager to please her.

But you never could tell about good-looking men.

He watched them go into the dining-room. He could just see their table. She was leaning forward, and she looked happy. Possibly he was telling her that she was lovely—lovely as a Greuze painting.

Perhaps, if the desk clerk had been nearer, he would have been alarmed. Perhaps not.

For Mr. Milton was saying:

"Fritzie, you may ride an elephant every day if you wish. But please don't dance with Cally—unless you want to very, very much."

And she answered irrelevantly,

"Rommie knows how to polka."

For Justice's Sake

When Poland Was Being Cruelly Exploited by Germany, Austria and Russia, the First Word Every Child Learned from Its Mother Was "Fatherland," a Word That May Mean More Than Life, as this Appealing Tale of Oppression Proves

By Maria Moravsky

SHORTLY after Easter, when the warm milky vapors began to rise from the damp black soil, I heard grandma saying to father,

"We need a few more men to help with the spring work."

"Very well, mother; I will go to Warsaw and hire them," he answered.

"Why, you don't need to ride to the city for that," protested grandma. "There are enough laborers in our village. Those spoiled city tramps would ask princely wages."

"Don't worry, *matusiu;* you may pay them as much as you find they are worth," he said reassuringly.

Grandmother looked puzzled.

"Why are you so sure? Have you in mind some people whom you know?"

"They are my friends," said father, kissing her hand for good-by. I saw by his frowning forehead that he did not want to answer more questions. I knew these two deep lines on his large forehead too well. They always appeared when I asked about Russia.

My father was a Russian, but I was brought up in Poland. My mother was a Pole and an ardent patriot. I was a patriot also. The first word which every Polish child learned from his mother was "*Ojczyzna*"—"Fatherland." This word was sacred, and meant great obligations toward our enslaved country. Poland was then torn into three parts—Germany, Austria and Russia exploited us with equal cruelty. Every child was taught that, when he or she grew up, there must be struggle for the freedom of the fatherland.

Father also wanted independence for Poland, although he was a Russian and had served for a long time in the Russian army. He said he wanted the country to be free—in the name of justice. I did not quite understand what it meant, but I loved to hear him repeating these words: "In the name of justice," for his eyes brightened then, his face would light up, and he looked as beautiful to me as Saint Sebastian the Martyr, whose picture hung in our village church.

When he left the house after the talk with grandma and called his white horse, I ran after him and asked him to take me to Warsaw. But he refused.

"The third of May is near; it wouldn't be safe;" he muttered, as if talking to himself. "I will take you some other time."

"What is the third of May?" I asked. But he was already in the saddle.

"Good-by, *lobuzie!*" he cried. "I will bring you a new doll."

I was left meditating under the old plum tree about the mysterious third of May. I was so disappointed that father had not taken me along. To console myself, I climbed to the top of the crooked tree and looked at the scenery. Our farm was on a hill, and the view from it was worth climbing to see.

Blossoming fruit-trees stood like gigantic white bouquets round our red-roofed house. The vast rye fields below the hill were coated with emerald green. The dark ruins of an old castle that stood in the distant valley, on the shore of the dried bed of a lake, looked quite black against the bright background.

I had always dreamed of going to those ruins at night, but I never dared. Wonderful things had been seen there, so the old villagers told me. The castle had belonged to the last Polish king, and the legend ran that in the night of the first new moon the slain patriots would rise from their unmarked graves and gather at the castle—to swear again eternal allegiance to their enslaved Poland. I believed it with all my heart. I had seen them in my dreams, galloping in the faint moonlight toward the dried lake. Its empty basin would suddenly fill and glitter like a great blue jewel. I imagined the dark glassless windows lighted up; I heard the sound of spurs clinking along the stony floors of the old walls.

The castle was believed to be sinking gradually lower and lower. There was a mysterious prophecy that some day it would disappear altogether in the bowels of the earth.

My nurse had warned me that I must not go to the castle because the ghosts might turn me into stone. I remembered this, and suddenly turned my head away from the tempting ruins. I looked down at the courtyard, trying to discover some safe daytime diversion, such as a new flock of ducks or a rooster's flight.

I saw, instead, Kubus, the precocious village urchin, riding a young pony. He sat firmly on its shining back, clutching with one hand its bright reddish mane and chastising the jumping animal with a twig of a willow tree. The pony galloped reluctantly, zigzagging to and fro along the muddy yard.

This pony was our family pet. It would eat sugar from one's hand, but nobody ever succeeded in breaking it. It was swift and wild and was called Ogien, which means "fire," because of the bright hue of its skin. When Ogien stood on a hill, grazing under the fiery midday sun, its mane seemed aflame, like the mane of the golden horse from the old Slavic legend.

The attempt of Kubus to break our pony seemed to me an insult to the proud animal. I slid down from my strategic point as rapidly as I could and cried,

"Don't you dare beat our pony!"

He gave no heed. So I tried begging.

"Please stop it! Why do you torture him so?"

He turned his head to me and answered with an air of ripe superiority:

"He must be trained. I will ride on him to the castle."

"To the castle! What for?"

"I decided——"

But he could not impart his decision, for at that moment Ogien made a violent jump, and I laughed with delight at seeing the offender prostrate in the mud.

"If you are going to laugh at me, I will tell you nothing," he said, rising calmly. "Hey, Ogien; come here!"

But Ogien had disappeared into the stable. Kubus was too tired to fetch him again. So he wiped his mud-sprinkled face with the hem of my apron and dragged me to the little arbor at the end of the orchard.

"I simply must tell you this thing, because it is awfully interesting."

I LEARNED from him, with thrill and admiration, that on the third of May there would be a great gathering in the castle. Not only the ghosts of the patriots but the witches and the strange animals on which they rode would also be present.

"It will be a regular Sabbath, like the one they hold on the Bold Mountain, you know. Old witches on brooms, home spirits on black goats, little devils on winged snakes, wood-spirits on flaming horses. They all sympathize with the patriots and are lending them supernatural power to throw off the Russian yoke. If I come riding up the mountain on Ogien with his red mane, they will take me for a spirit and leave me undisturbed, and I shall see everything. They will burn the portrait of the czar, and the moment it turns into ashes, the despot will die, scorched like a lightning-struck tree."

I listened with bated breath. I did not question the boy's amazing information.

"But why do they gather on the third of May?" I asked.

"Don't you know? It was the day when the last Polish constitution was made. The new teacher told us, but you must keep it secret, because the tyrants prohibit the teaching of Polish history in our schools. On the third of May, in Warsaw, the people gather at sunrise round the statue of King Sobieski. They inscribe their names on its white marble and swear to free Poland and get back the stolen constitution. Every time they are beaten by the police and arrested and sent to Siberia, but nothing can stop them. I love this! I will go there when I am grown up—to swear by the statue!"

I remember that my father intended to spend the third of May in Warsaw and shuddered.

"Kubus, I am afraid they will arrest and flog Igor."

Kubus shared my fear. He loved my father, who had saved him from the charity home and placed him on our farm as a *parobek*. He had little to do there, being only the third helper of our tender-hearted cook. Most of his time he spent reading the sentimental novels in our library.

"We must save him," decided Kubus, after a long meditation. "And I know how."

He made a simple and fearless plan—to go to the castle to tell the chief of the patriots' ghosts how wonderfully good was Igor, and to beg protection for him.

"Great Kosciuszko may help us easily. Two of his ghost guard can disperse a whole pack of policemen."

"Are you sure Kosciuszko will be there?" I questioned feebly. "I have read that he died in America, and the spirits usually keep near their graves till judgment-day. And that place, America, is far away, beyond the ocean. I saw it on the map."

"Beyond the ocean? Oh, that wouldn't stop Kosciuszko! That's nothing to him—he can swim it on a sea-serpent."

The last remark cleared my doubts.

"Will you take me with you, Kubus?"

"Yes; you may go and beg the great patriot by yourself if you want to. He was always kind to little girl orphans, and you have no mother. He will listen to you."

I gasped. To talk to a ghost! My courage never went so far. But—it was necessary to save my father.

I decided that I must go to the castle. I made an oath to be a good girl all the time till the third of May, never disobey grandma, never forget to say my prayers at night. Then the ghosts would have no evil power over me. It was only the thirtieth of April, so my trial had to last long; but I was ready to suffer everything to save Igor.

A GHOSTLY rainbow encircled the moon when I jumped noiselessly out of the low window of my nursery. The tall poplars stood motionless round the distant ruins of the castle, like narrow turrets guarding the dead building. A battered old wall surrounded it, and I shivered at the thought of climbing over the cold mossy stones, where snakes must live. Snakes and ruins have been always inseparable in my mind.

I did not want to wait till Kübus took me to the ruins. I wanted to be there first. You see, the boy decided to ride there on horseback, and not until the clock struck midnight. This sounded very romantic, but at the same time very terrifying. What if the witches took us for a couple of devils? What would become of my immortal soul if they dragged us to hell by mistake? No; I could not run such a risk—my grandma had promised to send me to the convent next year. So I decided to start my adventurous visit early, at moonrise, and kneel before the wooden figure of Saint Anthony, which stood at the roadside half-way to the castle. Then, when midnight came, I would be safely enfolded in the "blessed mantle of prayers," as the peasant-priests sung in the old hymn.

Running down the hill, I noticed with bewilderment something fluttering above the statue's head. It seemed as if the saint were waving a dark handkerchief at me.

Trembling, I approached the familiar figure with the Holy Baby in his arms and the heavenly lily in his hands. Above the symbolic flower there fluttered a flag.

I recognized it at once, although I had never seen it before and knew it by description only. It was the forbidden, beloved, romantic national flag, brighter than blood and dearer than life, the amaranthine flag of Poland, with a great white eagle in the centre—the symbol of free *Ojczyzna!*

Then, suddenly, I remembered that the morrow would be the third of May. At once I forgot all my cautious thoughts about insuring myself against evil. I bent my knees and began to pray with passionate ardor—not for the salvation of my silly little soul but for the freedom of my country. I prayed that the great day might soon come, and that my father would be the hero, the leader of the insurrection.

Full of the enthusiastic anticipations, I approached the ruins and boldly slipped into a narrow slit in the half-fallen wall. The moon shone brightly, peering into the round glassless roof-windows, staring at me like the dead eyes of a stony monster.

The lower Gothic windows, high and narrow, were closed with huge rotting shutters. Everything around was deadly still, but, strangely, the castle did not seem quite deserted. The fragrance of newly baked bread, the sharp odor of sweating horses and other familiar home smells seemed to float in the air. But, then, the cold night wind swept them all away, and the castle looked more deadly than ever.

I crossed myself and began humming the song-prayer: "Maria, the Star of the Sea" to cheer myself. I pushed the heavy front door, and it opened a little, squealing like a hungry mouse. I put my chilled hands to my ears, so as not to hear the sinister sound, and stepped inside.

I found myself in a many-cornered hall, which seemed immense in the dim moonlight. I could make out the indefinite figures of knights, kings' horses, birds and ladies which were painted on the walls. I saw clearly only one picture—the moonlight was streaming on it—a white eagle soaring above a fallen warrior.

I made a few uncertain steps. Something tickled my stockingless feet. I bent down hurriedly, remembering snakes. No; it was just long pale blades of grass sprouting through the slits of the cracked marble.

Chilling dampness was rising from the bare stony floor. I looked round to find a place to rest. I was so tired after my long run.

In a distant corner I saw a few dark objects which I took for cushions. I came nearer. No; they were saddles. I even did not wonder why so many saddles were laid there; I was too tired to be astonished at anything. I fell on the heap of damp leather and blissfully closed my eyes.

When I opened them again, the hall was full of crimson lights, which blossomed on the tops of dark torches, like the flaming red lilies of the martyrs. The hands of the people who carried them were covered with ancient iron gloves. Each torch-bearer wore a glittering helmet, and on each helmet there shone a silvery eagle, the eagle of Poland.

They sang with severe ardor the favorite hymn of the insurrection: "Poland shall not perish." Reverently I joined in the singing, looking up at a dazzling red torch. Crimson sparks began to fall from it, and a few of them strayed into my eyes. I rubbed them with my fingers. When I took my hands from my eyes, the hall was dark again. The last rays of the moon glistened on the silvery ornament of the saddle. I realized that I had been dreaming, and sighed sadly, mourning the passing of my beautiful vision.

BUT the singing still sounded in the still air of the night. It was not my imagination. Breathlessly I rose from my hard leather bed and went on tiptoe toward the low door in the opposite side of the hall. Reddish light shone between its hinges.

I peeped inside, and I saw those who sang. They were not knights dressed in the splendor of ancient arms. They wore the drab clothes of country laborers. But their faces were lit with unutterable ecstasy; they looked like saints and martyrs to me. And in the middle of their little group, touched with the reddish light of a candle-lantern, stood my father.

The stream of light rested on his hair, and it formed a nimbus above his lofty forehead. Truly, he was like Saint Sebastian, the Sufferer of Innumerable Spears. I pictured Russian soldiers pointing their bayonets at him, my hero, the leader of the insurrection. With a cry I darted forward, pushed open the door and fell weeping into the arms of my father.

"What are you doing here, you little rascal? Who told you I was here?"

"I didn't know you were here, Igor dear. Don't chase me away. I will not tell anybody, I swear!"

Already I realized that the meeting was secret. Was it not the night of the third of May? Everything which had a flavor of freedom had to be secret.

Father looked deeply into my eyes and said, laying his hand on my shoulder:

"For the sake of *Ojczyzna*, you must be silent. Does anybody else know?"

I was about to answer when a loud snorting sounded in the air. Then the slip-slapping of bare feet running on the marble floor, and I recognized the voice of Kubus swearing:

"Damn animal! Hela, where are you?"

Kubus and I were questioned severely as to the purpose of our expedition to the ruins. We told the truth. Father patiently explained to us that ghosts had never lived in the castle, but the revolutionists supported the superstitious belief of the peasants, because it made the empty halls safe for the patriotic meetings. There was hardly a man in the village who would dare enter there after midnight. The very singing of the patriotic songs safeguarded the plotters instead of betraying them. Who but ghosts of the slain patriots would sing the forbidden songs aloud in the night? So thought the peasants.

We both felt very proud of having everything explained.

Kubus felt a little disappointed that he would not take a part in the splendid midnight pageant of ghosts, sea-serpents and witches he had imagined.

"And I had been training Ogien—for so long!" he sighed. "And now you say there's no bewitched night, and I'll never ride on his back along with the spirits. The silly beast ran away; it wouldn't go in. I beat him and I beat him, but he snorted like the devil and threw me off."

Father's companions laughed, but father only smiled pensively.

"We may use the pony as a messenger," he said, after a brief meditation. "Do you children know how people train the carrier-pigeons? You do? Very well. You feed Ogien each day at sunrise, here in the castle. Can you get up so early, Kubus?"

Kubus nodded enthusiastically. He understood.

"We will call him now Patriota," I suggested.

The name was generally approved of, and the pony was enrolled in the patriotic service.

NEXT morning, a party of eight laborers started to work on our farm. Only Kubus and I knew that father did not hire them in Warsaw. They were all political exiles, recently returned from France, the country which had always been friendly to Polish aspirations for freedom.

They would toil silently in the fields, without much skill but with great ardor. I saw tears in the eyes of the eldest one when he touched the soil for the first time. He bent over the row of potatoes to dig up some young ones for dinner, and all of a sudden he dropped his shovel and pressed his face to the ground.

Now, it may seem sentimental to Americans, but for a dreamy Pole it was quite natural to kiss his enslaved land. It was symbolic. It was a promise of faith and struggle. And it exalted all of us so we could not speak.

They were working for a very short time, these silent pale men with conspicuously intelligent faces. Somebody guessed that they were not laborers. We were warned of a police raid. And so, on an early morning in June, the little party was given our best horses—my grandmother shared the secret at last and gave her permission to hide the patriots—and they rode away to the misty oak forest, which gloomed in the distance like a dark-blue wall shutting out the horizon. Later on, father joined them and we, his family, were left to the vague fears, to the dread of dangers which hung above his beloved head. Nobody knew his hiding-place.

But every day at sunrise Patriota would run to the ruins—to be fed by unknown hands—and sometimes he would return with a little note tied to his ear. It was written in a secret writing, and I knew that the weird signs told how many guns, cartridges, barrels of flour and pounds of gunpowder we had to transport to the forest on the next moonless night. My grandmother attended to that.

But in one of his trips our pony messenger was caught by a Russian patrol and taken to the fortress where the regiment of *Moscali* was quartered. This disastrous incident affected Kubus most of all, because an ardent friendship had lately formed between the urchin and the pony. He would wander aimlessly round the fortress, trying to catch a glimpse of his captured friend. He confessed to me that he intended to "steal back" Ogien.

A few days later the police raided our mansion. Everything was upset; every square inch of the house was sounded and searched. We had some compromising documents in grandmother's bedroom. I

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remembered trembling fiercely each time the gendarmes approached that room. Strange as it seems, the grown-ups confided in me as if I were a mature woman. But, then, children of my country often ripened before they grew up. Mental suffering had speeded maturity. I remember myself reading Voltaire when I was eight years of age and crying over the poems of Mickiewicz when I was a little over seven.

If the first word we Polish children learned to love was "*Ojzcyzna*," the first one we learned to hate was "*Moscali*," the despised nickname for Russians. And now *Moscali* were ransacking our house!

But they were not so inhuman as my childish imagination made me think. The documents were hidden under the marble slab which formed the top of a little mahogany table. And the gendarmes never moved the top, because the face of the Holy Virgin was carved on it.

So the Russians and Poles had ideals in common! I thought about it long after they left. And suddenly it struck me that my father was himself a Russian. It was not patriotism which made him fight for Poland's freedom; it was the cause of justice. For the first time in my life, my soul, which had been poisoned by race-hatred, began to comprehend dimly the brotherhood of all humanity.

There must be some mistake, some awful mistake why Poles and Russians hate each other. They might not. Igor is a Russian; grandma is a Pole.. I am— "What am I?" I asked myself for the thousandth time, and felt that my silly heart was splitting in two and I possessed two souls, one Polish and the other Russian. They both suffered for Poland and for father.

NOW I come to the most painful part of my narrative—that day on the market of Petrokof city. And as I write, I fancy hearing again the tolling of hundreds of church-bells, mourning the murdered patriots.

Petrokof had been in the hands of the rebels, but for a short time. Only for a few days did the amaranthine flag of Poland flutter above the city hall. The insurrection was subdued rapidly and mercilessly. The Moscal troops did not spare even children. Many of the little patriots had been flogged to death.

I had seen the dream of my life—my father entering the city as a conqueror, riding a white horse, with a crimson banner waving above his head. But it was also as short as a dream. Igor was captured after a day's fight and brought to the execution square together with a dozen of his nearest friends.

It was a windy sunset, and blood seemed to pour out from a dark cloud which choked the sun. The horizon was ash-gray. The face of the early moon was pale with horror.

I saw them standing near the well, their clothes covered with dust, their faces gray like the clouds. They were stripped of their boots; they had marched to the city barefoot, and their bruised feet were bleeding. I noticed a little pool of stiffening blood round the feet of one of them. He was my father.

I was near fainting, but I struggled to regain my strength at the sound of his voice.

"I am thirsty; bring me some water, Hela. And don't cry, child."

I ran to the well, snatched a jug full of water which stood there, forgotten by some gossiping maid, and stretched it to Igor. At the same moment a guard lowered his bayonet and dashed the jug out of my hands. It broke into pieces, and the water soaked into the dry dust.

I could not utter a word; I could not even cry. I wanted to kill him. For the first time in my life, I, a little girl, wanted to kill a human being. But my father looked deeply into my tortured eyes and repeated the saying of Christ:

"They know not what they do."

Oh, maybe humanity will be happy after generations of fools grow tired of breaking each other's heads and realize that they are brothers! This does not console me. The shame and pain of the scene I had witnessed, the thirsty, bleeding crowd standing round the well and denied a drop of water—this picture shall be forever imprinted on the pages of history, to the shame of mankind.

The long snakelike knouts were brought to the square. I remember whispering with my parched lips:

"Stop them, Holy Mother; stop them! You must know how it hurts—this is what they did to your Jesus. Stop them!"

My grandmother came and led me away. She said harshly:

"Stop your howling! Nobody will flog

him. He is a Russian nobleman. Only our poor sons will be so disgraced."

But I did not listen to her. I tore myself away and ran to the old *Kostel*, which stood behind the market, next to the house of Justice. There I threw myself on the cold steps before the main altar, crying aloud:

"God! God! God!"

When I lifted my eyes up to the picture of the soft-faced, white-bearded, kindly Polish God, it seemed to me that he, too, was weeping.

Later, in sleepless nightmare nights, I would dream of the amaranthine banner sprinkled with blood, waving above the market-place, above the naked human backs; the knouts lifted high and never, never falling down, but stopped as if they were frozen in the air; the terrible feeling of intense waiting, the agony of inexpressible fear. And in the middle of the square a well filled with blood. It took years to rid me of these ever-repeated nightmares.

After the humiliating punishment, most of the captives were executed without a trial.

WHEN the citizens of Petrokof learned of the execution of the patriots, the city put on robes of mourning. Everybody was dressed in black. Black flags waved from every building. The shutters of the houses were painted black overnight. The mourning mass was served in the cathedral, and the heavy, incense-scented air inside the somber Gothic building was stirred by the moans and vows of vengeance.

Next day, large placards were pasted on the walls. They were circulars of the Russian government, which forbade us to mourn our dead. It said, that "all Russian subjects who put on full black clothes as a mourning for the rebels will be considered guilty of high treason."

The black flags were torn down by the police, but the crowd looked dark as before. Obeying the letter of the law, which forbade us to wear "full black clothes," the citizens relieved the monotony of their somber garments by bits of red. Women wore blood-red corals, men crimson *boutonnières*. Children were given red bows to tie their hair with. Everybody was clothed in black, spotted with red—the symbol of violent death and martyrs' blood.

The authorities gave it up.

They did not dare execute my father without a trial. He was a Russian nobleman, and this entitled him to a hearing.

He was taken to the hospital, where he slowly recovered from his wounds. At first he was so weak that his nurse had to feed him with a teaspoon, like a child. I alone of all his relations was permitted to visit him twice a week. I remember my childish joy when he began to walk and eat as of old. His wounds were quite healed at last, and the head doctor said to him in my presence,

"Now you are ready, Igor Ivanovich."

"Yes; I am ready and willing to share the fate of my friends," answered my father placidly.

Horror stopped the beating of my heart. I cried,

"They are not going to do any harm to you, Igor?"

"Nobody can harm my immortal soul," answered father.

To the present day my own wild wailings sound in my ears. I remember the kindly-faced Russian nurse carrying me away. I heard the doctor reproaching my father for "cruelty to the child."

"She must know, for I have no son," answered my father calmly. "Bring her to me, nurse. Hela, you shall remember. You know what I mean, my little swallow?"

I could only nod, weeping.

"This is the most outrageous propaganda—to corrupt your own child!" raged the doctor. "And you, Igor Ivanovich a Russian!"

When the nurse was carrying me away, I heard faintly the words of my father:

"For the sake of justice, Doctor. Poland and Russia——"

I don't know what was said about Poland and Russia, but they remain forever united for me by that sentence.

My grandmother grew more and more desperate, awaiting my father's trial. I heard her crying in her sleep, "Don't make the child a full orphan!" It was for my sake that she forgot her patriotic pride and sent a petition to the czar, begging him to forgive "his humble, misled subject, Igor Erinof."

I was indignant about it. But in spite of my proud disapproval, I felt a faint, shamefaced hope stealing into my heart.

Nobody believed, however, that the petition would have any effect. Petitions of mercy seldom were shown to the czar; they would proceed no farther than the cabinet of the first minister, and this man was nicknamed "the chief hangman."

We were not allowed to attend father's trial. He had to face it alone. Two weeks after he was captured, we were informed that, taking into consideration his noble birth and former services in the army, great mercy would be shown him. He would be shot, not hanged.

I REMEMBER everything as if it happened yesterday.

Father stood at the stake, on the edge of a freshly dug pit. I knew that it was to be his grave.

The soldiers wanted to tie him to the stake, but he stopped them with a dignified gesture of his thin, pale hand. They wanted to put a bandage on his eyes, but he shook his head. He wanted to see God's beautiful morning and his friends to the last moment.

I remember every little detail of that horrible morning. A swallow perched for a while on the top of the ominous stake. Then it made a few rounds above the open grave. I don't know why I watched the little bird as if its appearance were full of secret meaning. Everything seemed to be full of deep meaning at that tragic hour.

My father wore his favorite red blouse. It was torn round the neck. I could see the fresh scar of his lately healed wound, a scar that was inscribed on his bared breast like some strange hieroglyphic.

He was pale—oh, so pale and quiet! Reverently he kissed an ancient ikon which an old Orthodox priest lifted up to his bloodless lips. I remember it was heavily framed in gold. It was a somber Byzantine ikon, and the dark face of Jesus looked strangely unfamiliar to me. It was so unlike our Polish Jesus, light-haired and kindly; it was the severe face of an alien, unforgiving God.

"Why did they not bless him with a Polish *obraz?*" I asked my grandmother, weeping in desperation—as if this fact were worse than the execution itself. "Does he not belong to our Church?"

"Never mind, Hela!" answered my grandmother dryly through her firmly set teeth. "Up there, at the last heavenly trial, God will judge him over to us!"

Father was allowed to speak to the crowd, but the hot wind blew away his speech. I just saw his lips moving. The soldiers who stood near him must have heard his words, for many a soldier wiped his eyes with the coarse sleeve of his gray uniform. I wondered why grown-up men were not ashamed to weep.

When his lips ceased to move, a little soldier with a yellow strawlike beard struck a drum—a big, ugly, loud, hateful drum. We all knew that it was the signal of death. There was an endless moment when the soldiers were lifting their guns. Now, when I see the analysed motions on the film of an American movie, I always recall that torturing moment when they were so slowly aiming their heavy *vintovkas* at my father.

I could not watch them any longer. I wished I were blind. I lifted my eyes up to the sky with passionate longing for a miracle. Would it be so hard for the Virgin Mary to leave for a moment her shining throne, be carried down by her servant angels, down to the base of the horrible pit? Oh, why did her blue mantle not appear before the eyes of the executioners who were going to shoot my father? Why did she not shelter him with the dazzling hem of her sapphire garment as she sheltered in the olden time the walls of the Chenstochova convent in the sacred war against the Teutons?

No; there was no miracle. The sky darkened. The heavy clouds, which had been gathering all the morning, thickened rapidly and ate up the sun. The hot wind grew violent. I heard the roar of the first thunder—or was it the shots?

I shuddered and looked down. I saw the smoking *vintovkas*. The shots melted into the sound of thunder. My heart went to father. He still stood erect before his stake.

Why had all the shots missed him? Was it cruelty or pity? I never could tell. The chief officer gesticulated wildly, shouting uncomprehended Russian words into the faces of his embarrassed soldiers. Their hands trembled like autumn leaves in a wind. Slowly they began to lift their guns again——

I cried madly and darted away from my grandmother. I ran and ran across the dusty field that seemed endless; I stretched my hands up and cried:

"Igor! Igor! God will damn you, soldiers, if you kill Igor!"

The soldiers turned their heads in my direction, but they were not looking at me. All of a sudden I became aware that somebody was running behind me. There were faint cries of bewildered surprise in the crowd. Involuntarily I turned my head.

Our red-maned pony was galloping toward the soldiers, raising clouds of darkened dust. A little boy bent low over its shining back. His bare feet clutched convulsively the slippery sides of the unsaddled beast. He waved a white sheet of paper.

"The pardon!" cried my grandmother.

And the crowd repeated, like a flock of parrots,

"The pardon!"

The soldiers lowered their guns. The officer stretched his hand toward the sheet of mercy. Kubus jumped down from Patriota. He ran madly away and vanished in clouds of dust.

But Kubus did not give the paper to the chief officer. He handed it, instead, to the oldest soldier of the regiment—to Vanko, the sergeant.

Vanko read it with difficulty. I saw how hard it was for him to comprehend. His jaw moved as if he had to chew a crust of hard army bread. Then he lifted his bearded face up to the sky and crossed his breast thrice.

"My God Almighty, help me!" he cried aloud, as if he were alone with his God.

Then he whispered a few words to the nearest soldier. The soldier whispered it to his neighbor. The secret news was fluttering from lip to lip like a moth flying from one lighted candle to another. In a moment it reached the crowd. A university student with an old withered face and fiery eyes cried it out.

"The Russian soldiers at the fortress have mutinied! They refuse to fight the insurrection!" He turned to the soldiers. "You must join your fellow soldiers! You don't want to kill your former chief! Long live Igor!"

"Long live Igor!" repeated the crowd, moving threatingly toward the executioners. "Poland shall not perish!"

"Long live Igor, the patriot!"

There was a strange, confused movement among the soldiers. Their chief urged them to obey the orders. They shouted angrily back. My father stood still among the excited crowd as if he were a passionless statue of Saint Sebastian, made of pale-yellow marble—a figure forgotten among the ruins of a deserted church.

For a moment the running crowd hid him from my eyes. I heard scattered shots. Then one long, orderly salutelike shot, as if all the regiment had fired its guns together. When the crowd dispersed, I saw the soldiers marching past over the hastily filled pit, over the pit which they had dug for my father!

IT SEEMED as if the sky would fall on my head. I wanted to cry, but my throat was too dry to utter a sound. I threw myself on the ground and lay there with my mouth open, like a dying fish on the sand.

Then I heard a majestic singing. It was the national Polish anthem, and the voices that sang were ringing with enthusiasm.

"Maybe the angels are welcoming the soul of Igor," I whispered and looked up to heaven.

The sky was clear; the clouds had dispersed; the lonesome hot sun shone fiercely from its splendid blue solitude. The singing sounded from the parched earth. I lowered my eyes. Above the bared heads there fluttered a blazing flag—the amaranthine flag of Poland!

I jumped up and looked round in amazement.

Pale and beautiful, like a blessed ghost from heaven, my father marched far ahead of the crowd.

"Igor, are you alive?" I cried, but my voice was drowned in the singing.

"Is he dead? Do you also see him?" I asked at the top of my voice, pulling the sleeve of a young man who marched by. "You know, he is my father——"

The youth stopped, lifted me up in his arms and said in my ear:

"The soldiers shot their chief instead. They trampled over his grave, so as not to leave a sign. Igor, the patriot, is safe."

His voice sounded like a trumpet of heavenly joy. I saw the sky bursting open and the golden stars pouring down on the dusty field. I felt I was drowning in a pool of melting stars.

When I opened my eyes again, I was in my father's arms.

Photograph by Ira D. Schwarz

Just before he dies, *Oliver Blayds* (O. P. Heggie) confesses to his daughter *Isobel* (Alexandra Carlisle) that he has been a literary impostor.

The Truth *about* Blayds

The Story of this Interesting Play Concerns a Matter of Doing Justice to the Genius of a Man Long Since Dead. Do you Think That the People With Whom the Decision Lies Do the Right Thing?

By A. A. Milne

Author of "The Red House Murder," "The Dover Road," etc.

Published by courtesy of the author; the producer, Winthrop Ames, and the publishers, G. P. Putnam's Sons

POETS should be read but not lived with. *Septima* and *Oliver*, grandchildren of the great *Oliver Blayds*, are heartily agreed as to this, for they have been brought up in the shadow of his greatness. They have none of that reverential awe for him that marks the attitude of their fussy, ineffectual mother, *Marion Blayds-Conway*, and her pompous little husband, *William*, who, since his marriage, has been secretary to the poet, and who takes his position as guardian to greatness very much to heart. To the young people, *Blayds* is just a crotchety old man whose whims limit their lives.

To-day is the ninetieth birthday of the poet. *Austin Royce* has been delegated by a group of the younger writers to present their tribute to the great man, and it is a shock to him to hear young *Oliver* speak casually and not too admiringly of the aged poet. He takes the boy to task for it.

Royce: Oliver Blayds is a very great man and also a very old man, and I think that while you live in the house of this very great man, the inconveniences to which his old age put you——

Oliver: Yes; but you've missed the whole point. The whole point is that I don't *want* to live in his house. Do you realize that I've never had a house I could call my own? I mean a house where I could ask people. I brought you this afternoon because you'd got permission to come anyhow with that address of yours. But I shouldn't have dared to bring anybody else along from the club. Here we all are, and always have been, living not *our* lives but *his* life. Because—well, just because he likes it so.

Protestations seemed to be in the air, for later in the day *Septima*, finding her mother alone, makes a strike for freedom.

Septima: Mother, I want to speak to you.

Marion: Yes, dear? Do you mean about anything important?

Septima: For me, yes.

Marion (*distressed and annoyed*): You haven't annoyed your grandfather, I hope.

Septima: It has nothing to do with grandfather. Rita Ferguson wants me to share rooms with her. You know I've always wanted to, and now she's just heard of some; there's a studio goes with them.

Marion: Yes, dear. We'll see what grandfather says.

Septima: "We'll see what grandfather says"—that has always been the answer to everything in this house.

Marion (*as sarcastically as she can*): You can hardly have forgotten who grandfather is. What was it the *Telegraph* called him only this morning? "The supreme songster of an earlier epoch."

SEPTIMA: No; I haven't forgotten what grandfather is, but you're telling me what he *was*. He *is* an old man of ninety. I'm twenty. Anything that I do will affect him for at most five years. It will affect me for fifty years. That's why I say this has nothing to do with grandfather.

MARION (*distressed*): Septima, sometimes you almost seem as if you were irreligious. When you think who grandfather is—and his birthday, too. (*Taking out her handkerchief and dabbing her eyes.*) You must talk to your father.

SEPTIMA: That's better. Father's only sixty.

MARION: He will see what grandfather says——

SEPTIMA: And there we are—back again to ninety. It's always the way.

MARION (*plaintively*): I really don't understand you children. I don't know what grandfather will say when he hears about it.

SEPTIMA: I think I'll get Aunt Isobel to tackle grandfather. She's only thirty-eight. Perhaps she could persuade him.

Isobel Blayds is confronted with her own youth to-day in the person of *Austin Royce*. At twenty she loved him, but she gave up marriage to become her father's nurse. When *Royce* comes into the library, where she is arranging flowers for the birthday celebration, they stand speechless for a time with the surprise of meeting after all these years.

ISOBEL (*who has lived fifty years since then*): How long ago was it? Eighty years. Or it is only eighteen. And now we meet again. You married?

ROYCE (*uncomfortably*): Yes.

ISOBEL: I hope it was happy.

ROYCE: No. We separated some years before she died.

ISOBEL: I am sorry.

ROYCE: Was it likely it would be happy?

ISOBEL (*surprised*): Was that all the chance of happiness you gave her?

ROYCE: You think I oughtn't to have married?

ISOBEL: Oh, my dear, who am I to order people's lives?

ROYCE: You ordered mine.

ISOBEL: Marriage isn't everything. You have been happy in your work, in your friends? My father will be in directly. You are here to see him, of course?

ROYCE: Yes. Tell me about him—or, rather, about yourself. You are still looking after him? Has it been worth it?

ISOBEL (*evasively*): He has written wonderful things in those twenty years. Not very much, but wonderful. *Has* it been worth it?

ROYCE (*puzzled*): I don't know. It's difficult to say. The world would think so; but I—naturally I am prejudiced. (*Smiling.*) You might have looked after me for those eighteen years.

ISOBEL: Did you want it as much as he? (*He protests.*) No; I don't mean "want" it —need it.

ROYCE: Well, that's always the problem —isn't it?—whether the old or the young have the better right to be selfish. We both needed you in different ways. You gave yourself to him, and he has wasted your life. I don't think I should have wasted it. If you were back now, knowing what you know, would you do it again?

ISOBEL: It isn't fair to ask me. I'm glad now that I have given him those eighteen years, but perhaps I should have been afraid of it if I had known it was to be as long as that. It has been trying, of course—such a very old man in body, although so young in mind—but it has not been for an old man that I have done it—not for a selfish father but for the glorious young poet who has never grown up and who wanted me.

William interrupts them. The hour for the drinking of the health has arrived, and the family assembles in the library. *Isobel* goes off and returns shortly with her father in a wheel-chair.

Oliver Blayds does indeed "look like somebody." His eyes, under their shaggy brows, are still young. Indomitable spirit and humor gleam in them. You can see his amusement at the antics of *William*, who as majordomo, is enjoying himself immensely. He seems particularly pleased to receive the tribute which *Royce* presents and bids him stay and talk to him for a while an honor seldom accorded visitors. He tells him stories of his youth which even *Isobel* has never heard before. Stories especially that reveal his love of sportsmanship—of doing things in "the grand manner."

THAT night he dies. *Isobel* refuses to permit his burial in Westminster Abbey, an honor to which his place in English letters entitles him. She will give no reason for this, but she asks the family to come to the library after the funeral.

She tells them then that *Oliver Blayds* was an impostor. Seventy years ago he and a friend were living together in rooms in Islington. The other youth was a poet, a genius, with no thought of present rewards, only eagerness to put down the poetry bubbling up in him before death, which was dogging his heels, overtook him. "He had no thought of fame; he was content to live unknown, so that, when dead, he might live forever." He died, leaving his work to *Oliver Blayds* to dispose of, for he had no friends or relatives.

ISOBEL: I suppose that, like every other temptation, it came suddenly. He writes out some of the verses, scribbled down anyhow by the poet in his mad hurry, and sends them to a publisher. One can imagine the publisher's natural acceptance of the friend as the true author, then the friend's awkwardness in undeceiving him, and his sudden determination to make the most of his opportunity. Oh, one can imagine many things—but what remains? Always and always this: That Oliver Blayds was not a poet, that he did not write the works attributed to him, and that he betrayed his friend.

WILLIAM: I don't believe it. I had the privilege of knowing Oliver Blayds for nearly thirty years, and I say that I don't believe it. When did he tell you this?

ISOBEL: That last evening. His birthday. He seemed frightened suddenly—of dying. I suppose he'd always meant to tell somebody before he died.

WILLIAM: Why didn't you tell us before?

ISOBEL: I promised not to say anything until he was dead. Then I thought I would wait until he was buried.

OLIVER: Gad! Fancy the old chap keeping it up like that! Shows how little one really knows people. I had no idea he was such a sportsman.

SEPTIMA: Such a liar!

WILLIAM: Please, please! We sha'n't arrive at the truth like that. You want me to understand that Oliver Blayds has never written a line of his own poetry in his life?

ISOBEL: I wish you to know the truth. We've been living a lie all of us, all our lives and now at last we have found the truth. You talk as if, for some reason, I wanted to spread slanders about Oliver Blayds now that he is dead, as if all this great lie were my doing, as if it were no pain but a sort of pleasure to me to find out what sort of man my father really was. Ask me questions—I want you to know everything—but don't cross-examine me as if I were keeping back the truth.

OLIVER: What was the other fellow's name?

WILLIAM: I am coming to that directly. What I am asking you now is this: Did Oliver Blayds write no line of poetry himself at all?

ISABEL: He wrote the 1863 volume.

WILLIAM (*staggered*): Oh!

OLIVER: The washout? By Jove! Then *that* explains it!

ISOBEL: Yes; that explains it. He tried to tell himself that he was a poet, too. So he brought out a volume of his own poems. And then when everybody said, "Blayds is finished," he went back hastily to his friend and never ventured by himself again. And that explains why he resented the criticism of that volume, why he was so pleased when it was praised.

WILLIAM (*defeated now*): Yes; that would explain it. Oliver Blayds! (*Buries his head in his hands.*)

OLIVER: It's rather a problem, you know.

SEPTIMA: It isn't a problem at all. May I speak for a moment? I really think I have a right to say something. Oliver and I have been brought up a certain way to expect certain things. Oliver wanted to be an engineer; he wasn't allowed to, as his grandfather wanted him to go into politics. I wanted to try and get on with my painting. I wasn't allowed to, as my grandfather wanted me at home. Perhaps if I had had my way, I might have been earning my living by now. As it is, we have been brought up as grandchildren of rich people; I can't earn my own living, and Oliver is in a profession in which money means success. Aunt Isobel has been telling us how a young man of Oliver's age, seventy years ago, was cheated out of his rights. Apparently she thinks that the best way of making up for that is to cheat Oliver and me out of *our rights*. I don't agree with her.

OLIVER: Yes; there's a good deal in that.

ISOBEL: It's hard on you, I know. But you are young; you have your lives in front of you.

SEPTIMA: That's what old people always say to young people, and they seem to think that it excuses any injustice. Suppose relations do turn up. Well, what will they be? Grand-nephews, or fifth cousins twice removed or something, who have never even heard of Jenkins and on whose lives Jenkins has no effect whatever. Is there any sort of justice which says that they ought to have the money? But Noll and I have given up a great deal for Oliver Blayds, and he owes us something.

Isobel cannot think of the money—money has meant so little to her. She thinks of the dead boy who has been cheated of his fame, as she was cheated of her youth. So *Oliver* suggests that they restore the fame but keep the money.

ISOBEL: The way you talk—about money. As if all that we had lost was so much money. As if you could estimate the wrong that Oliver Blayds did in the terms of money. I said the money was tainted. It is. How can you bear to touch it?

SEPTIMA: That's pure sentiment, Aunt Isobel. It isn't even practical. If you're going to throw the money away, then you've got to throw the house away and everything in the house away—all our clothes, to begin with. We should look very funny the five of us walking out from the house tomorrow, with nothing on.

OLIVER: That isn't fair, Tim. An extreme case makes anything seem absurd. (*Earnestly to* ISOBEL.) You know, I do see what you mean, and I do sympathize. But even if we kept all the money, would that matter very much? All this man Jenkins wanted was to leave an immortal name behind him. I don't say it's much of a name, but neither was Keats for that matter. Well, grandfather robbed him of that, and a damned shame, too, but now we are giving it back to him. So all that's happened is that he's had seventy years less immortality than he expected. But he can't worry seriously about that, any more than Wordsworth can worry because he was born two hundred years after Shakespeare. They are all equally immortal.

ISOBEL: One can't argue about it; you feel it or you don't. I give up my share of the money, so there should be plenty for all of you, even after you have been "fair" to the others.

THE next few days are spent in getting things in shape to present the truth about *Blayds* to the world. *Austin Royce* is called in to help them. *Marion* and *William* are still unreconciled, and, after the manner of muddle-minded people, they have been searching for a solution which would be congenial to them and at the same time satisfy their consciences in regard to Jenkins. Even honest-minded *Oliver* can hardly swallow the pill, and he has hit upon the idea that his grandfather was under an hallucination at the time when he made this revelation. The happy word is to *William* as a life-preserver to a drowning man.

WILLIAM: It has occurred to me that possibly we are in too much of a hurry to believe this story of—er—this Jenkins story. I suggest as a possibility that Oliver Blayds—er—imagined it.

ISOBEL: What can I say, William, except again how nice that will be? No scandal, no poverty, no fuss, and his life in two volumes, just as before. We are a little too late for the abbey, but, apart from that, everything is as nice as it can be.

MARION (*entering*): Isobel dear, have you heard the wonderful news? About grandfather's hallucination. I always felt that there must have been some mistake. And now our faith has been justified—as faith always is. (ISOBEL *looks to* WILLIAM *for help.*) Poor, dear grandfather! He was so very old, and the excitement of that last day—his birthday—and perhaps the glass of port. I shall never forgive myself for having doubted. I think grandfather will forgive us, dear. I can't help feeling that, wherever he is, he will forgive us.

Isobel, who cannot make these comfortable mental adjustments herself, feels quite hopeless. But an unexpected way out is found. *Royce*, in going through some old papers, finds Jenkins' will. "To Oliver Blayds, who has given me everything, I leave everything," it reads. And then, underneath, "God bless you, dear Oliver."

ROYCE: Well, that settles the money side of it, anyway. Whatever should have been the other man's belongs rightfully to Oliver Blayds.

William has another brilliant idea at this point.

THE grandchildren of *Oliver Blayds* are very fed up on the fame of the aged poet. *Septima Blayds-Conway* (Frieda Inescourt) makes her brother *Oliver* (Leslie Howard) give her a shilling every time they hear lines written to her quoted, something that *Austin Royce* (Gilbert Emery), an homage-paying visitor, has just done.

(Left) *William Blayds-Conway* (Ferdinand Gottschalk) and his wife, *Marion* (Vane Featherstone) discuss the startling revelation of the poet's guilt, which has greatly upset them.

Photographs by Ira D. Schwarz

WILLIAM (*triumphantly*): I've got it! Now I understand everything. The 1863 volume—that always puzzled me. Now, at last, we have the true explanation. The 1863 volume was written by Jenkins!

SEPTIMA: Rot! Rot! It's rot trying to deceive ourselves by making up a story about grandfather just because we don't like the one which he told Aunt Isobel—What does it all matter, anyhow? What *does* it matter when you've quoted it, whether you add, "As Blayds nobly said" or, "As Jenkins nobly said"? It's the same poetry. And then there's the money. I said that it ought to be ours, and it is ours. Well, there we are.

WILLIAM: You are quite content that your aunt should publish as she proposed to, this story of—er—Willoughby Jenkins, which I am convinced is a base libel on the reputation of Oliver Blayds?

SEPTIMA: I am quite content with the truth.

OLIVER: It's all very well for *her*, but if it comes out, I'm done.

ROYCE: What do *you* believe, Oliver?

OLIVER: Hallucination. At least, it seems just as likely as the other, and I think we ought to give it the benefit of the doubt. What *is* the truth about Blayds? I don't know.

ISOBEL (*calmly*): I do, Oliver. What can I do but tell the world the truth?

ROYCE: Hm. I wonder if the world will be grateful.

ISOBEL: Does that matter? The truth is an end in itself—the only end. Call it truth or call it beauty, it's all we're here for.

ROYCE: You know, the trouble is that the truth about Blayds won't seem very beautiful. There's your truth, and then there's William's truth, too. To the public it will seem not so much like beauty as like an undignified family squabble.

ISOBEL: It seems so unfair that this poor dead boy should be robbed of the immortality which he wanted.

ROYCE: Hasn't he got it? There are his works. Didn't he have the happiness and the pain of writing them? How can you do anything for him now? It's just pure sentiment, isn't it?

ISOBEL: I expect you're right. I can't do anything. Are one's motives ever pure?

ROYCE: One hopes so. One never knows.

ISOBEL: I keep telling myself that I want the truth to prevail—but is it only that? Or is it that I want to punish him? He hurt me so. All those years he was pretending that I helped him.

The family have gone out now. *Royce* has been waiting for this opportunity. There is still time for love and happiness, he feels. But *Isobel's* air of detachment is not encouraging.

ROYCE: Isobel!

ISOBEL (*a bit startled at his tone*): My dear, she died eighteen years ago, that child.

ROYCE: Then introduce me to her mother.

The new note of banter puts them at ease with each other again, and they continue in that way.

ISOBEL: Mr. Royce, let me introduce you to my mother—thirty-eight, poor dear. (*Bowing.*) How do you do, Mr. Royce? I have heard my daughter speak of you.

ROYCE: How do you do, Mrs. Blayds. I'm glad to meet you because I once asked your daughter to marry me. Do you know what she said? She said, like all properly brought-up girls, "You must ask my mother." So now I ask her. "Isobel's mother—will you marry me?"

ISOBEL: It's only because you are sorry for me—because I'm lonely.

ROYCE: It's very selfish of you, talking like that—harping on your loneliness. What about my loneliness?

ISOBEL: You aren't lonely.

ROYCE: I shall be if you don't marry me.

ISOBEL: I'm afraid to. I shall be so jealous.

ROYCE: Jealous? Of whom?

ISOBEL: Of that girl we call "our daughter." You will always be looking for *her*. You will think that I sha'n't see; you will try to hide it from me. But I shall see.

ROYCE (*confidently*): I shall find her. Not yet, perhaps, but some day. Perhaps it will be on a day in April, when the primroses are out. Then, a child again, she will laugh for joy of the clean blue morning, and I shall find her. And when I have found her, I shall say, "Thank God, you are so like your mother—whom I love!"

Isobel puts out her hands to him. He takes them and kisses them.

The play of next month will be Walter Hackett's "Captain Applejack," a great success both in this country and in England. See September EVERYBODY'S—out August 15th.

A Novel Complete in This Issue

Rolling Restaurants

Did You Ever Know One of those Odd Persons Who Make a Fad of Collecting Curious Humans Just as Some People Collect Stamps and Strange Inanimate Things? You Have Him Here—the Leader in a Queer but Fascinating Adventure

By Richardson Wright

Illustrations by Mead Schaeffer

JAMES FITZGERALD PENBURY yawned behind his hand. The family council sitting on his case had been in session much over an hour, and as yet it had failed to conciliate him.

Behind the desk at one end of the heavily furnished library sat his father. In the dim light of the shaded lamp, Judge Penbury's face appeared grave, magisterial and disappointed. At his right, balanced stiffly on the edge of a large, overupholstered chair, was his wife, a large, overupholstered matron gowned in a lavender *robe d'intérieur* that, at unexpected intervals, broke into orgies of bead-work. Her daughter Claire occupied a shadowy corner of the couch on the farther side of the room—a fastidious blond sylph in Nile-green chiffon. Fresh from finishing-school, she had not as yet descended to the level of her respectable and inoffensive family. During the course of the evening she made few remarks, but these few were far more effective than those her mother chose to utter. They were chiefly concerned with "society," and each of them roused a disgusted glance from her brother.

This offending member—a red-haired, towering figure, fashioned after the leanness of his father—was perched on the arm of a chair by the fireplace. He wore a soft shirt and rough homespun tweeds—in ostracizing contrast with the rest of the family.

"Let me get this straight," he began, gesturing toward his father. "You're all decided that it's my duty to become a lawyer and to go into politics, with a view to holding public office as you and Grandfather Fitzgerald did before me."

"That's it exactly."

"Well—" James took a deep breath and drew himself up to his full height. "I'm not going to do any such thing."

"James!" His mother was pained.

"I suppose you'll go into some common business," came from Claire.

"Yes; dirt common." He faced her. "But I'm going to do the thing I've always wanted to do, and I can assure you that it's not to study law."

"How can you be so stubborn?" Mrs. Penbury asked. "You know——"

"Let the young ass say his say." His father raised an interrupting hand.

"Twenty-eight isn't so young. I'm not so young that I haven't legal rights. What about Grandfather Fitzgerald's money?"

Judge Penbury winced. This inheritance approach was partially responsible for the family conference. The boy's maternal grandfather left the money in trust until he should attain twenty-eight. And next week James would be twenty-eight.

"Legally, you are entitled to do with it as you please—provided you do not waste it or make a fool of yourself."

."No fear!"

"I merely mention it because—" But Judge Penbury did not state his reasons.

The boy was an enigma. At boarding-school he had picked up the tatterdemalion rag-tag and bobtail of back alleys and mean streets. Nor did he reform when he went on to Harvard. He collected curious humans the way other young men collect banners, stamps and Indian arrow-heads. In his senior year this interest took a more practical form—he spent his free evenings teaching Polish urchins in Boston's slums.

Since his graduation and return to Corchester five years before, he had shown no inclination to make his own living. Save for six busy but unfruitful months in an army training-camp, he had devoted most of his time to a combination of bookworming and desultory settlement work. As he avoided girls and social functions, the upper crust of Corchester looked upon him as a mild and harmless social heretic. The other nine-tenths of the pie considered this tall, thin young man with the tousled red hair a strange but valiant champion.

BUT the élite of Corchester was obliged to give him credit for one achievement. That was when he took an ardent fancy to Sylvia Hunter. To most of Corchester, Sylvia Hunter was a vague figure who was always just leaving for Europe or just returning from somewhere else. Between them and her stood an impenetrable array of masters and servants and the stand-offish air of a large estate. She did not mingle much with Corchester society, mainly because she had not been in Corchester much since her mother died, some years back. Watchful matrons, always ready to seize upon opportunities for their sons, did not consider her available—she seemed so far away, so vague, so intangible. They assumed that no Corchester youth had the slightest chance. The fruit hung too high.

When Judge Penbury's son showed a sudden interest in her and she in him, Corchester stiffened in its parlor chairs. The Penburys didn't know quite what to make of it. Though secretly elated, they thought that James should be taken in hand and groomed for his future rôle.

This was the underlying motive for the family council, called at the instance of Mrs. Penbury and Claire and seconded by the judge—this and the impending inheritance.

"You spoke of having an ambition," Judge Penbury said. "Just what is it?"

For a moment James hesitated. He glanced at his father, then down at the floor.

"I've had this ambition since I was a small boy. I think I inherited it. I've always wanted to own a restaurant."

"What?" chorused the three.

"Oh, please don't be shocked. Grandfather Fitzgerald made his first money in an oyster-bar down by the river——"

"Times have changed since then," Judge Penbury interrupted gravely. "We occupy a place in the community that will not permit of such nonsense."

"Never!" His mother bridled into a position of stout rectitude.

"Think what people would say!" Claire moved to the edge of the couch and fluffed out her skirts with an airy gesture. "How could I explain to Charlie Sanderson, for example, that your one ambition in life was to run a restaurant?"

Penbury shrugged. This young blood who was so attendant on Claire meant nothing in his life.

She gave him a darting, angry glance and leaned forward for a lunge.

"What would Sylvia Hunter say?"

"She'll understand, all right."

"You mean you haven't told her yet?"

"No."

"Aren't you going to?"

"I certainly am when the time comes to tell her."

For a moment she did not reply. Finally she managed, "A restaurant!" and sank back on the couch.

"Well, it isn't exactly *a* restaurant. It's a chain of restaurants."

"A chain of restaurants on thirty thousand dollars?" the judge snorted.

"They won't be as expensive as you think, sir; I've the figures right here." James drew forth a large envelope and proceeded to unfold papers. "My original investment in equipment, food, advertising and help will not exceed twenty-two thousand dollars. That leaves me a safe margin. I signed up for the purchase of these properties to-day," he added, patting his palm with the papers.

Judge Penbury shifted uneasily, cleared his throat and said slowly,

"There is just one more question: What kind of restaurants are these?"

"They're dog-wagons."

As though pushed back by an unseen hand, the three Penburys collapsed in their chairs. Claire went white. Mrs. Penbury gasped. Her bosom heaved beneath its orgy of bead-work. Her husband sat square-jawed, glaring in amazement at the boy. Under the fire of their angry astonishment, James remained unmoved.

It was he who finally spoke. His tone showed that he wished to close the session; and in this he was successful.

"By Tuesday," he said evenly, "I shall own eight of them."

THE following Tuesday morning the Corchester *Herald* carried this advertisement, extending over a quarter of a page, set in bold type and bordered top and bottom with rows of conventionalized beer-mugs:

TO ERSTWHILE BARTENDERS

Appreciating the unfortunate lack of employment that prohibition has caused in your ranks, I have made plans for a business in which you may be interested. Applicants must be bartenders of long standing, sober, and capable of taking responsibilities. If they can cook, so much the better. Call at office, 37 Brinker Building, to-morrow morning between nine and ten o'clock.

James Fitzgerald Penbury.

When he stepped from the elevator the next morning, he found his progress blocked by a shuffling crowd. They were old, young and middle-aged; gray-haired, black, blond and red. They were thin and they were corpulent. They were Irish, German, Scandinavian and Yiddish. But they had one characteristic in common—they seemed sad. They looked as if they had just returned from the funeral of some one who hadn't the slightest chance of a joyful resurrection.

By dint of pushing and crowding, Jim managed to reach his office door.

"Quite a crowd!" he remarked cheerfully to his stenographer, as he hung up his hat and coat.

"Yes, sir. They was here when I come in," Miss Garrity replied.

He went over to his desk.

"Ah, the mail has arrived!"

"Yes, sir. It's opened."

Everybody's Magazine, August, 1922

"Opened?"

"In all the offices I worked in," she answered languidly, "the mail was opened. All except the personal."

"Ah yes!" He hid his confusion by shuffling the papers. But she had triumphed. After all, he was very inexperienced in office procedure. Only the morning before had he acquired this office and taken her on. She must not expect the actions of a man long in business. He picked up a letter and began reading aloud, " 'One cup of buckwheat flour, one measure of blueberries—' Ahem! That sounds good!" He took up another. " 'The fat must be boiling. Dip the meat balls in egg and roll in bread-crumbs—' Ah! Fine!" And, smacking his lips, he turned to her with a stern, businesslike glance.

"Now I will take a look at those men. I am going to select eight of them. While I am talking with those eight, you will go out and take the names and addresses of the others. They will come in handy when we arrange for the night shift. Did you get the cigars?"

"They was frightful expensive," she answered, producing a box from her desk drawer. "Seven cents apiece."

The crowd pressed forward when he opened the door.

"Gentlemen"—he held up a hand—"kindly form yourself into a line. It will greatly expedite matters. Also, please remove your hats."

Gradually the crowd dissolved into a queue that tailed off down the corridor.

Jim walked slowly down the line. As he approached, each man struck a pose. It was the sort of pose a man takes when he acts as a pall-bearer—shoulders braced, face grave, and hat held in hand with the crown lowermost and the lining exposed to the elements, at about the level of the right lung.

Reaching the end of the line, he turned and came back. Here and there, until eight were chosen, he stopped, chatted with a man about his previous employment and finally said,

"Will you kindly step into my office?"

The eight men who responded to Penbury's invitation to be seated were as like as eight peas in a pod. They were as fine an aggregation of ex-bartenders of the old school as could ever be assembled.

Each was comfortably corpulent. Each had black hair dressed in a pompadour. Each had a sweeping black mustache, apple-colored glistening cheeks and large, glassy eyes.

ONE especially stood out among them—the one occupying the end chair nearest the desk—Mr. Michael O'Toole. He was slightly larger, a bit more rotund, a bit more glassy of eye and glistening of cheek than the others. In his face was the record of a life devoted to the appraisal of drinks and drinkers—evidently a sociable, affable man, with his own views on local politics, home rule and other topics of the day.

Strangely contrasting with them was Penbury, for he bore no trace of his Irish ancestry save the carroty red hair. His face was generously freckled and carried a laugh-line down each side of the mouth. He spoke with that pronounced cultured accent, which is apt to linger long after a man has been graduated from Harvard.

"Help yourselves to cigars, gentlemen," he said, pushing the opened box across the desk.

They hesitated for a moment. Then O'Toole, overcoming his embarrassment, stretched forth a hand. The others followed. They lighted the cigars.

"I am going to do an unusual thing," Penbury began, looking round the circle, "an unusual thing for an employer talking to his prospective employees—I am going to take you into my confidence."

This statement was received with respectful silence.

"To-day I inherited a sum of money from my grandfather—Mr. James Fitzgerald. Some of you may remember him. He was twice mayor of Corchester."

"An' a foine gintl'man he was!" Mr. O'Toole interjected.

"This morning I invested that money in eight lunch-wagons, at which I plan to serve the best possible food at the lowest possible prices. I have reasons for believing that the business will be a success. First, people must eat." He said this crisply and looked round for the result. Behind the eight pairs of glassy eyes something seemed to stir. "Second, the every-day people, whom we hope to have for patrons, appreciate good food." Eight pompadours nodded. "By catering to a great many people, we can make a reasonable profit."

"I see," Mr. O'Toole muttered.

"Of course we will serve all the regular dishes—hash, ham and eggs—but"— he raised a finger to make the point—"but our success will depend upon specializing on one or two dishes and getting a reputation for them."

"Same as for drinks in a bar," Mr. O'Toole offered.

"Precisely." Penbury shuffled his papers. "So I have acquired, at no little expense, the recipes for two dishes which, I thoroughly believe, will mean our fortune. From an eminent guide in Maine"— he held up one of the letters—"I have bought a flapjack recipe for which he is justly famous. From Oscar, of the Waldorf, I have bought the exact process for making meat balls. These meat balls are the sort the Germans call *Koenigsburger Klop* and the Russians *peroushkies*—a center of delicious veal with an outer casing of crisply cooked dough. You are doubtless familiar with them." Again the eight heads nodded. "But, gentlemen, why have I chosen these particular dishes?"

At this abrupt question, they removed their cigars and leaned forward expectantly.

"Because the flapjack is an American dish. It will naturally receive favor from the American-born of our population. The meat balls that I have chosen are a favorite dish of those nations—the German and Russian—from which comes the bulk of our foreign population here. The latest census of Corchester shows that out of our one hundred and twenty-five thousand population, sixty-seven per cent. are American-born. Flapjacks! Eighteen per cent. are German-born and eleven per cent. Russian. Meat balls!" He threw up his arms with an enthusiastic gesture. "We are bound to succeed because we are appealing to the greatest possible number of tastes."

They were evidently impressed. The tension relieved, they mouthed their cigars again. Penbury leaned back in his chair. His voice dropped.

"I have picked you gentlemen to be the managers of those wagons. I am offering you thirty dollars a week to start with, and five per cent. of the profits. This scale of wages and profit-sharing will increase as the business increases. If the public gives us the patronage I expect, you should be making from forty to fifty dollars this time next year. I have planned that every month, when the books are balanced, one of you is to go over them with my bookkeeper to assure you of a just and honest apportionment of the profits. Are you interested?"

Simultaneously the eight shifted in their chairs and looked from one to the other. Finally seven of them looked at O'Toole.

"Just what will this here work consist of, Mishter Penbury?" O'Toole asked.

"You will cook."

"But we can't cook."

"I have arranged for that. Before the wagons go into operation, each of you will be given a thorough course in cooking, with special training in our two special dishes."

Penbury thought he saw a slight hesitation on the faces of some of the men. They didn't seem so enthusiastic as he had expected.

"Perhaps you gentlemen would like to talk this over between you," he said, rising. As they did not reply, he bowed and stepped into the hall.

Hardly had the door closed when the grunt of their voices filled the office. Finally, from the other side of the door, Penbury heard one of them say, "Git him, Mike."

O'Toole opened the door. As Penbury stepped across the threshold, he stiffened, struck a pose.

"Misther Penbury, me and me friends will be honored to be imployed in yer restaurants."

"Gentlemen, I thank you," Penbury replied punctiliously.

The impressive silence that followed this unbusinesslike acceptance was broken by a suppressed giggle from Miss Garrity.

THE Hunter place stretched across some forty acres to the north of the town. From the bronze-gated entrance the drive wound up the hill between an alley of poplars, dipped down the other side and made a huge turn-around to reach the fore court of the house. The house stood with its back to the drive, and its front façade—or "meadow front," as the Hunters pleasantly called it—commanded the formal gardens and lawns that stretched by gently undulating terraces down to the river meandering through the valley. It was a rambling, English-county-house sort of place of brick and half-timber, with occasional unexpected bay windows and stately rows of leaded casements marked out with stone window-frames.

As Penbury rounded the top of the hill and approached it through the last star-spangled dusk, it appeared softened, mellowed, centuries old. The faint pianissimo of an Offenbach air drifted out to him as the maid opened the door. He tiptoed into the hall and slid onto a big couch before the fire. Sylvia had not seen him. The pirouetting, ghostly ballet-vision faded into silence. The stops clicked back into place. Sylvia stood up on the pedal platform and glanced round her expectantly. She was like a moonbeam in that saffron frock. The black curves of her coiffure caught high lights from the organ-lamp. It projected her silhouette against the wall—the fine modeling of her nose and lips and determined chin.

"Please play it again," he called from the depth of the couch.

"When did you come in?" She ran down and, leaning over the couch, gave his hair a fugitive pat and dropped down beside him. "I'll play it later. But, first, you must tell me what all this mysterious business is. And what on earth do you intend doing with bartenders? And why haven't you told me of it all before?"

"Well, my dear, it's a great scheme." He leaned closer to her. "I didn't speak of it before because I didn't want to promise something that I couldn't deliver, as they say in the trade. I'm fairly sure of making a delivery—so I can now talk about it. One of these days I'm going to be the lunch-wagon magnate of Corchester. My wagons will be called 'Penbury's Rolling Restaurants.' "

"Really, Jimmy?"

"Really." He nodded his head.

"And have you started yet?"

"My dear, I opened an office yesterday and hired my bartenders to-day."

"But why did you insist on bartenders?"

"For two very simple reasons." He drew out a cigarette and lighted it deliberately. "First, bartenders are out of a job. Secondly, the older men, such as I have employed, are good jugglers."

"Jugglers?" She looked puzzled.

"Yes; jugglers." He began explaining with appropriate gestures. "In the old days, a man didn't go into a bar so much for the drink's sake as to watch the dexterity of the bartender. The barkeep who couldn't twirl a bottle round his finger and juggle two glasses with the other hand couldn't hold down his job." He scratched his chin reflectively and gazed into the fire. "In later days, the profession fell into the hands of an untrained rabble who could neither juggle nor toss, who merely went through the disgusting performance of setting up drinks. Consequently, the saloon fell from its high social plane—a merry place where men sat together for the good of their stomachs and the cheering of their souls—down, down to the depths of crime and filth and drunkenness. Rather than see a noble art debased, Congress abolished the saloon."

"QUEER old Jimmy!" she murmured, gazing into the fire. "But I don't see what juggling bartenders have to do with lunch-wagons.

"You don't? The bartenders will cook!"

He jumped to his feet before her, scooped up an imaginary something, tossed it into the air, caught it again and put it back in place.

"Among the specialties in Penbury's Rolling Restaurants, my dear, will be blueberry flapjacks. 'The higher you toss 'em the lighter they get.' That'll be my slogan. I have hired juggling bartenders to toss the flapjacks."

"Oh, Jimmie, Jimmie, you're a perfect delight! Come sit down and tell me more about them."

Penbury sat down beside her.

"Penbury's Rolling Restaurants," he began, "will be the most extraordinary eating-houses you've ever heard tell of. In them I hope to immortalize the favorite old taverns that this villainous prohibition has put out of business and would fling into oblivion. The Cock and Hen—The Red Lion—King George's Tipple—isn't it an amazingly good idea?"

"Go on, Jimmy," she encouraged, snuggling closer.

"They will be models of cleanliness, compactness and fine service. They will be—if I do say so myself—superb! Everything in its place, as on shipboard. Napkins in a glass case for regular customers—clean ones on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Each wagon will have an oil-stove with a polished brass hood, and folding tables and comfortable stools, a convenient pot-rack, an ice-box filled every morning from the outside and scoured each day. And the decorations, my dear— Superb again!" He gestured and laughed. "When you see them you will dance with joy. The Brimming Bowl will take you back to Chaucer's day—hand-adzed beams and rude furniture and sawdust on the floor. Hanging from the ceilings sides of bacon and bunches of corn. Blue curtains—that deep blue one finds on medieval lacquer. A dog asleep in the corner. I'm giving orders that no dog is to be turned away foodless.

"In the Red Lion, the atmosphere of a Colonial inn, north of Philadelphia. What Benjamin Franklin said about eating is lettered in a frieze round the walls. The furniture is Colonial. The curtains are red, bound with blue and embroidered each with thirteen white stars for the thirteen colonies.

"Hole in th' Wall is fashioned after a Bowery den—famous in its day for unexplained and unpunished murders. Dusty gin-bottles dangling from the ceiling and the walls elaborated with crude sporting-prints—ladies and horses—of the giddy 1880's and framed newspaper accounts of famous prize-fights of those time. Here the curtains are a criminal red.

"In the Cock and Hen, the walls are rough plaster tinted cock's-comb red, the ceiling blue with stars and signs of the zodiac spattered over it—like a barn-yard at night. The curtains are turkey-red. Red, by the way, is a favorite color with men. I've used it generously. The Goat in Boots, famous old drinking-place down in Chelsea, London, near Park Walk. In this, the walls will be adorned with ancient woodcuts by a sympathetic young artist, showing the frightful results of drinking, gambling, wife-beating and the other diversions of an older generation." He stopped and dropped back on the cushion. She was silent. Suddenly he sat up straight. "You like the idea, don't you?"

"I think it's perfectly splendid, Jimmy! Certainly it's new, and it ought to make money. No one ever heard of such lunch-wagons before. Creating them is precisely the sort of thing I'd expect you to do."

"Well, I'm glad to hear you say that," he answered, falling back on the couch again, as if relieved.

"Why? Aren't people keen about it?" she asked.

"Well, Claire seems to think that it will disturb the equilibrium of Charlie Sanderson."

"Charlie Sanderson? Puh!"

"I feel exactly as you do, Sylvia," he replied.

"Oh, let's not think about him," she said, shrugging. "I want to hear more about the rolling restaurants."

He thought for a moment—threw back his head and slowly blew a smoke ring.

"If you are very good, I'll let you into one of the most secret of secrets."

"Is it about them?" She looked up into his face.

"It's about the parade." The word "parade" evidently conveyed no idea to her. "On the opening day, there'll be a parade of my wagons down Main Street," he said dreamily, as if thinking the plans aloud. "My managers on horseback, hordes of small boys dressed as cooks, placards and banners held aloft, huge draft-horses dragging the wagons—draft-horses with green and yellow plumes and covered over with nets—bands—lots of bands, mounted police— I think I will call it 'Penbury's Pageant of Gastronomic Delights.' "

"What a perfectly gorgeous idea!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands. "May I help make the costumes?"

"Make them? My dear, I came here to-night to ask you if you wouldn't design them."

And for the rest of the evening the two designed costumes—such costumes as Corchester had never heard of or dreamed about. There were gorgeous panoplies, glittering robes from out of the past, an amazement of color and tinsel and historic luxury.

JIM chose a Saturday afternoon for the parade. It was late April, and the working people of Corchester would be on the streets.

The bulk of Corchester's population was of the factory-hand type. For it was one of those historic New England cities that has had a second blooming. About twenty years back factories found it an advantageous site and settled along the sprouting railroad and the river, ran up acres of modern buildings and even more acres of tenements. The population doubled, tripled and was still growing.

In mid-town was still the stately, aristocratic, elm-lined street inhabited by descendants of the original stock who lived there in old-fashioned elegance but in constant terror lest some one of the foreign element should buy on the street and ruin their oasis of respectability. The farther reaches of the town were street on street of tenements, housing a large alien population to whom the ancient history of the place and these remnants of its past meant nothing. To this vast working class the rolling restaurants and the pageant of gastronomic delights were designed to appeal.

Rumors of the parade had been judiciously permitted to leak into the papers and to become a topic for wonderment. During the past two months the eight managers and the night shift had gained a proficiency with flapjacks and meat balls. Under Penbury's personal guidance the decoration of the wagons was finally completed.

Consequently, when Corchester opened its newspaper that pleasant, clear April morning, it faced a full-page advertisement of the parade.

PENBURY'S PAGEANT OF GASTRONOMIC DELIGHTS

BY PERMISSION of His Honor, the Mayor, and with the able assistance of the police, Corchester will be permitted an extended view of Penbury's Rolling Restaurants this afternoon—Saturday, April 25th.

Escorted by many bands and a multitude in costume, the wagons of Penbury's Rolling Restaurant System will parade down Main Street to the Town Hall Square. The parade will start promptly at 2 o'clock.

After the parade the restaurants will be on exhibition at the Town Hall Square until 6:30, when they will take their positions for the patronage of the public as follows:

The Cock and Hen—Lambeth and 14th Streets.

The Knickerbocker Bar—Herbert Street near Union Station.

The Red Lion—Guerin and 27th Streets.

Hole in th' Wall—Methuen and Davis Streets.

The Brimming Bowl—Grierson Street near Kemp Saw Works.

King George's Tipple—Bebee and Hamilton Streets.

The Last Card—Benson Street near the Ball Grounds.

The Goat in Boots—Main Street near the car-barns.

These wagons, each named after a celebrated tavern, will serve all the regular dishes that please the palate, especially

BLUEBERRY FLAPJACKS
AND
PENBURY'S MEAT BALLS

Watch our corps of trained cooks!

Our Slogan—

"The Higher You Toss 'Em
the Lighter They Get."

Don't Miss
PENBURY'S PAGEANT OF GASTRONOMIC DELIGHTS

There was no missing this advertisement. The entire Penbury family read it, and only with the greatest difficulty did James manage to leave the house at noon. The family scorn knew no bounds. His departure was made even more difficult because of his costume. He wore a fashionable morning coat, a silk hat, white riding-breeches, and he carried a mysterious long bundle.

"I suppose you'll lead the parade," his sister flung, as he opened the door.

"I certainly intend to," he returned.

At his office, the atmosphere was more serene. Miss Garrity had already gone to her point of vantage on the curb. He sat down and perused the noon mail. He was not excited, and he wondered at it. After these months the accomplished fact was here, present—and yet he took it calmly.

The babble of the crowd hushed as the line of mounted police, close-packed from curb to curb, swung into the broad stretch of Main Street. Behind them the Fourth Regiment Band—"The Fighting Fourth" in glittering parade dress crashed out a giddy air that made the horses step high. It was "The Wearing of the Green." (Penbury had requested plenty of Irish tunes.) Four stalwart men, dressed as chefs, even to the proverbial waxed mustaches and goatees, followed on, bearing a huge yellow banner lettered in green: "Penbury's Pageant of Gastronomic Delights." Behind them came four more chefs carrying a banner that read: "The Higher You Toss 'Em the Lighter They Get."

Then came Penbury himself. He was mounted on a magnificent chestnut and wore his top hat, in deference to the eight who followed, at a rakish angle, showing a generous bang of carroty red hair. In his hand he carried for baton a large tin serving-spoon.

A ripple of applause met his approach. The majority of people along the curb either knew him personally or by sight. But the real applause, the genuine hysteria of the crowd, burst forth when the eight managers clattered into view. Corchester knew these men. For years they had been barkeeps at the prominent local hostelries. Their courteous, smiling faces had greeted half the male population of the city in its time.

"Hello, Mike! Atta boy, McSorley!" These and other appropriate cries rose from all sides.

The enthusiasm continued—mingled with a little awe—as the first wagon rumbled into view. It was drawn by four horses wearing nodding plumes and guided by outriders dressed as cooks.

In front of them marched a figure in a costume of the thirteenth century—a slashed doublet of yellow and red ribbons and a round cap of motley, from which dangled dangerously in front of his eyes a long pheasant feather. He carried the wagon's name aloft on a placard—"The Cock and Hen." The other side of the placard bore the legend: "Lunches Packed Up to Take Out."

AT FIRST sight of him, the crowd gasped. Then it burst into applause that became a veritable frenzy as they saw, on each side the wagon, close to the curb, urchin cooks with trays, tossing out samples of Penbury's especial gastronomic delights—flapjacks and meat balls, neatly wrapped in oil-paper. Hands stretched out. "Hey, kid, gimme one!" "You know me, bo!"

The boys worked furiously. As fast as they emptied one tray, they ran back to the wagon for another. The stovepipe of each wagon was smoking, and, inside, the night shift worked heroically to serve the crowd's appetite.

Each of the wagons was like a cozy little bungalow. Its roof had emerald-green shingles. The walls, which came down and covered the wheels, were bright yellow, and on them was spelled in emerald letters. "Penbury's Rolling Restaurants." On the front door and on the back was lettered the name of the wagon. The ridge-pole carried an American flag at its fore peak and at the rear the stovepipe. A cozy touch was given the outside by wide overhanging eaves and little casement windows, from which fluttered bright-yellow curtains.

Following this came a tall, raw-boned negro in the costume of Brother Laurence, the monkish fifteenth-century cook, with long cassock, cowl and girdle. He bore himself solemnly, like a great prelate, and carried the placard: "Hole in th' Wall." Every other step or so he turned the card around, and the crowd read: "All Kinds of Pies."

Immediately behind him, drawn by its four horses, rumbled another wagon, with red curtains and the glimpse of a bottle-lined interior beyond. After this, half a block behind, came the second band, blaring out "Garry Owen." There was a band between every other wagon, and so loud was their music that it almost drowned the cheers of the crowd.

The last strains of "Let Erin Remember" died away as the final wagon reached Town Hall Square. Penbury dismissed the bands and assembled his eight managers for final instructions. A great crowd swarmed about, peering in the windows and giving their approval. It was a good-natured crowd. As Penbury rode past, they seized his hand and congratulated him.

Finally, when he was satisfied that all was going smoothly, he handed his horse over to O'Toole and sought out Sylvia's car. She had promised to meet him on the other side of the square when it was over.

He found her limousine. Sitting in the rear seat with her was his sister Claire, an airy figure with her nose tip-tilted. Opposite her, a picture of sartorial elegance, was Charles Sanderson.

Claire was a sufficiently unexpected person to meet—but Sanderson! There was something about Sanderson's slicked-back hair, something about his aristocratic absence of chin, the way he wore his clothes, his elevated manner of speaking, that bored Jim. He tucked the serving-spoon into his boot and opened the door.

"Oh, Jimmy, it was brilliant!" Sylvia exclaimed.

"Yes, rather," chimed in Sanderson.

"I'm glad you liked it," he replied. He was not actually happy, and yet a thrill of delight swept through him at the presence of Sylvia.

"But, Jimmy, why the spoon?" This from Claire.

"A symbol," he said, without glancing their way.

"Symbol of serving, I suppose?" A faint, supercilious smile drifted across Claire's face.

"Exactly!" Penbury prodded the spoon farther down into his boot.

"I'm afraid Jimmy hasn't quite grown up yet," she remarked, turning to Sylvia.

"Not grown up?" Sylvia's eyes flashed. "I hope he never grows up from such things. After all, hasn't he undertaken a mighty big project?"

"Oh!" Claire seemed a little taken aback. "I meant—" She glanced up to see her brother looking her straight in the face, and did not finish.

"Don't you agree with me, Mr. Sanderson?" Sylvia asked.

"I certainly do," he answered enthusiastically. "I think the rolling restaurants are a corking good scheme. Profit-sharing and all that. Quite radical."

Sylvia looked at Sanderson and then at Penbury. So that was what Sanderson thought about the wagons! They raised their eyebrows in amazement. But, in doing so, they missed the wry wink that Sanderson gave Claire.

"Well, people, I'm sorry to have to run along, but I've a million things to do." Penbury opened the car door and stepped down to the pavement.

"Yes; we must be getting along, too," Claire offered. "Sylvia was a dear to pick us up."

The motor began to throb. As it drew away, Sylvia blew him a kiss.

The others were not looking in his direction.

AS SYLVIA came out on the terrace, her father, who had been down superintending some work in the greenhouse, started up the steps.

"Where's my Sylvia going all dressed up?"

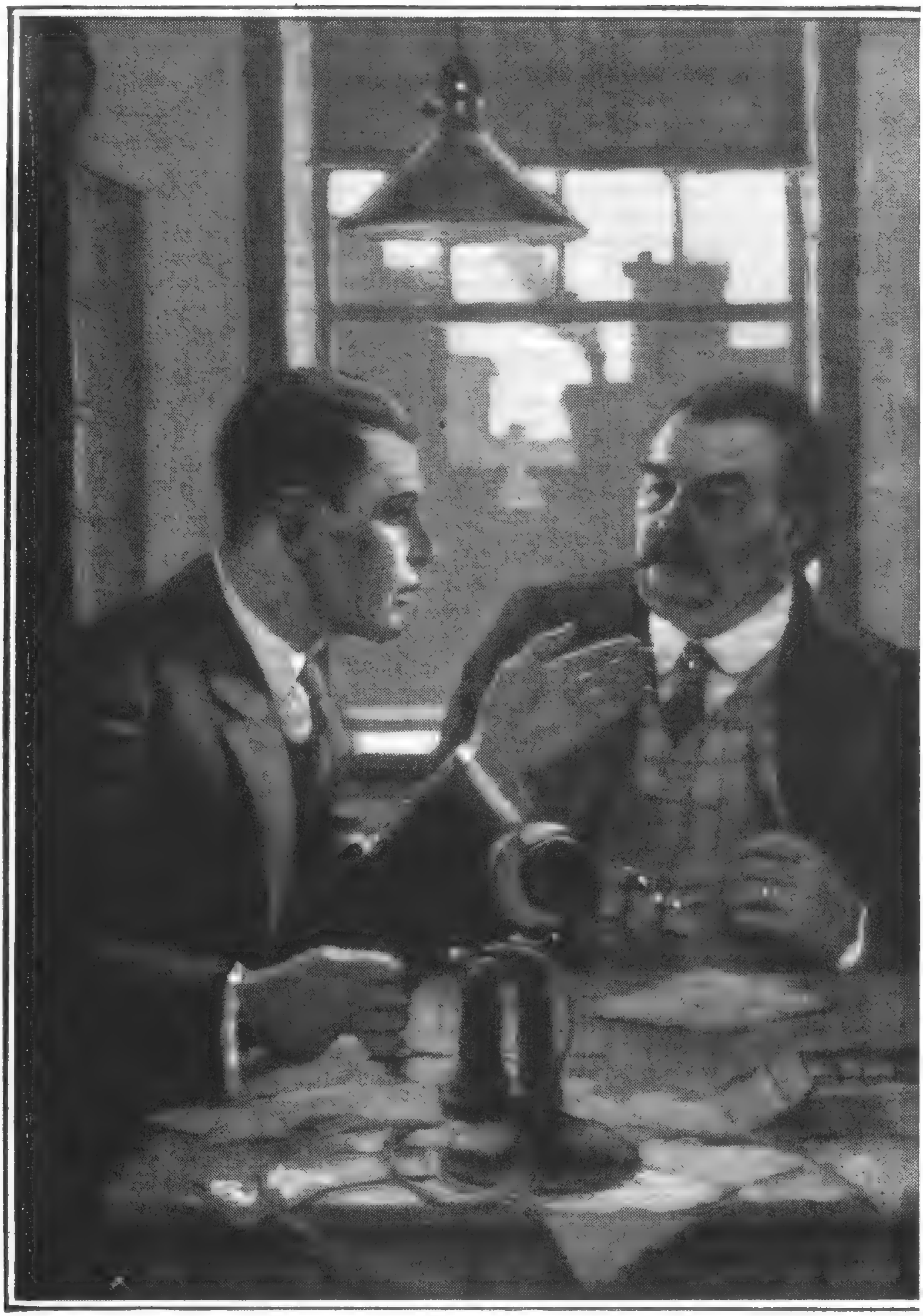
"Walking," she answered.

"Walking with Corchester's premier *restaurateur*, I suppose."

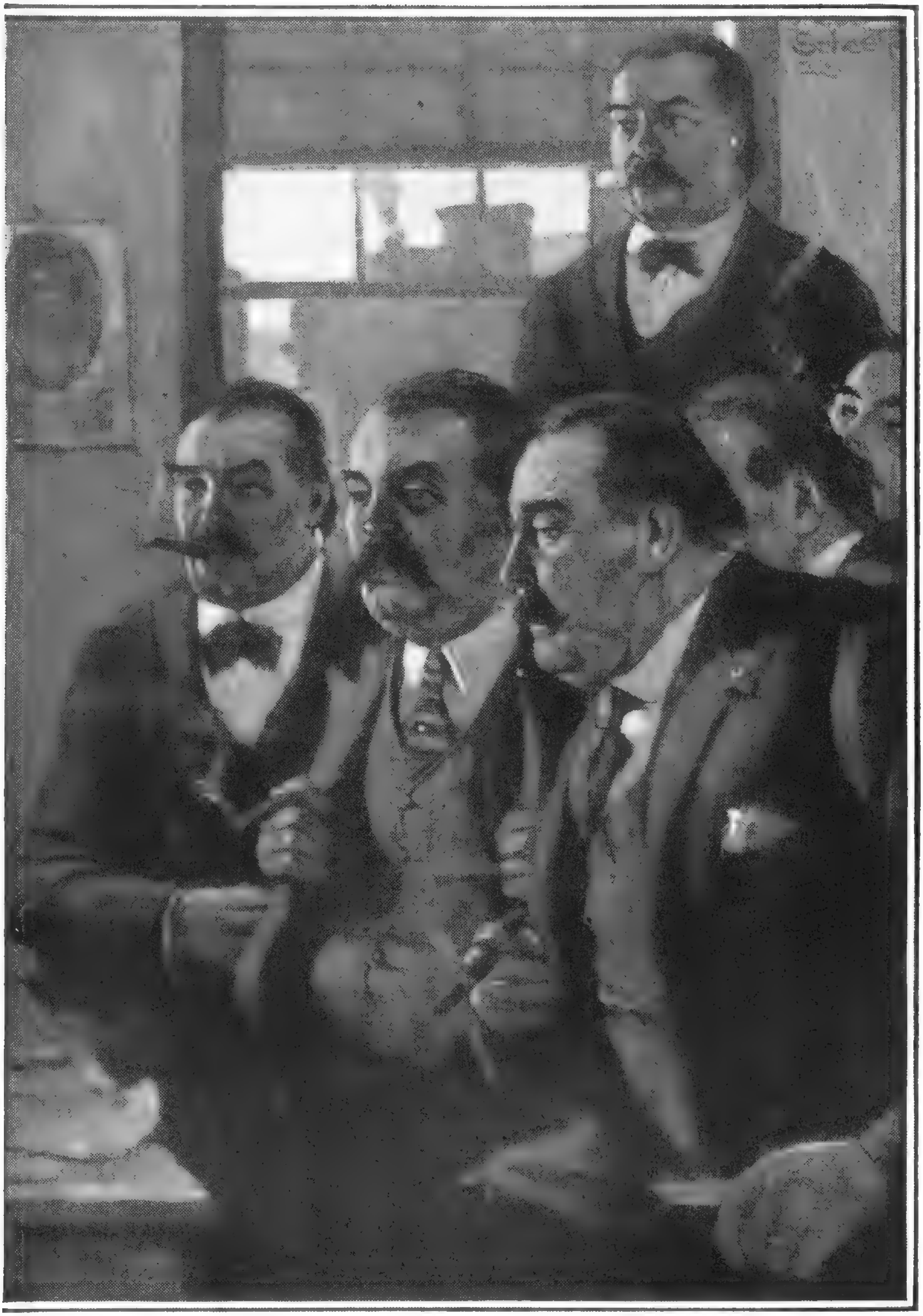
A faint blush colored her cheeks.

"You don't mind—do you, daddy?"

"Mind? Why, bless your heart, I think it's fine! Jim Penbury's one of the nicest boys in Corchester, even though he is queer as Dick's hatband."



"I am going to do an unusual thing," Penbury began, "an unusual thing for an employer talking to received with



his prospective employees—I am going to take you into my confidence." This statement was respectful silence.

"You don't have to tell me that," she countered.

"What do you mean? That he's nice? Or that he's queer?" He pulled a long face on her.

"But he really isn't queer, daddy; he's just whimsical."

"Yes; and I guess he'll recover from his whim all right." Mr. Hunter scratched the point of his stubby beard and smiled. He was a short, stocky man with white hair and white pointed beard, and from behind the rimmed goggles his eyes twinkled with a constant play of laughter. "When you say he's whimsical," he continued, "I suppose you mean he's no business man."

"How can you say such a thing, daddy?" She stamped her foot. "Look what luck he's having with the rolling restaurants! You've got to give him credit for that!"

"Lord, yes! I'll give him all the credit in the world. That sort of credit doesn't cost money."

"Now, dad, don't be mean."

Hunter pulled a cigar from his pocket and cut off the end reflectively.

"Well, anyhow, I suppose one of these days he'll be asking me for credit."

"You mean borrow money from you?"

He nodded through the glow of the match.

"You're the last person in the world he'd borrow from. Jimmy is too sensitive, too shy; he has too much respect for my feelings."

"Yes; but, darling, you mustn't mix feelings and finance. Remember that Jim Penbury has undertaken this business on a small capital. That's very courageous. If he makes a go of it, I take off my hat to him. But one of these days he may want to borrow money. All business men do it. It's a good thing for your credit to borrow money. One of these days he'll go to——"

"To you? Never!"

"No; maybe not—he'll go to Sanderson's bank, the First National, where he has his account and where his father has his. Sanderson will be all sweet and nice to him and may loan him the money—although Jim may have some difficulty in getting such a loan, because every one in Corchester seems to know how unpopular those dog-wagons are with some members of the Penbury family. And if they are unpopular with Claire and her mother, think how unpopular they would be with Claire's favorite young man, Charlie Sanderson!"

"But, daddy"—she looked up into his face—"Charlie Sanderson can't do anything to the wagons."

"He's just been made one of the directors of the First National——"

"Oh, do you think he would do anything to Jimmy?"

"Don't worry, darling." Hunter patted her head. "I'll know all about it before he does. Only, don't say anything to Jimmy. Here he comes."

THE air was limpid, such as comes on an early-autumn afternoon when a gentle rain has cooled the earth. Before them the brown road bent over the hill and went down into the valley toward the city. They could see Corchester's rows of houses and office-buildings and stretches of factories catching a glint from the full afternoon sun. The path-side weeds glistened with fresh rain.

A bit of a lass in a plaid skirt and purple sweater, Sylvia had trudged all afternoon beside him. His long knickerbockered shanks could take one stride to her two, but she had managed to keep up with him. It quickened her to see him swinging along, his stick keeping time with his steps.

"So that's Claire's present objection," he said, viciously swishing off the head of a goldenrod clump beside the path. "She thinks the names of my wagons are vulgar."

"She didn't put it quite that way," Sylvia answered, skipping to catch his stride. "She said that for the name of Penbury to be associated with such vulgar affairs as lunch-wagons was not pleasant, and she didn't see how a man with your education could choose those names."

"And you said?"

"And I said that you had a good reason for naming those wagons the way you did, and that you weren't a vulgar person." She glanced up admiringly at him.

"Ump. I wonder why she hasn't said these things to me." He trailed his stick behind him reflectively. "Poor kid, she doesn't understand—that's all. You see, Sylvia, I believe that men should have a place where they can gather together and loaf—a place not ostensibly made for reform or reeking with virtue. That is why I named my rolling restaurants after eight old taverns." He shrugged casually. "Of course, I'm criticized. The family think I have dragged them into the depths of disgrace. But when they see a balance-sheet on the profit side of my ledger, they'll sing a different tune. It's amazing how a little money makes a difference, even in the best families."

"You can't very well live without it," she answered, "and until now you weren't making any."

"I was waiting for this opportunity," he said quickly. The accusation had hit him in a tender spot. "Some men plunge into their careers like a diver from a spring-board. I prefer to wade in slowly."

They walked on for a few moments without speaking—her remark had dampened his ardor. Finally, they found a silent, empty spot a thousand miles from anywhere—it was a big rock behind the sheltering thick trunk of an elm. He helped her climb up and they sat there in the last ardent glow of the sun, watching the hillsides mellow. It was a rarely peaceful sight stretched out before them, with its brown fields turning to mauve in the dusk.

"I don't want to make too much money, though," he remarked, taking up the conversation where he left it off. "I am going to be perfectly satisfied if I can eventually build a house on that hill over there."

"Yes?" she encouraged.

"A rambling sort of white Colonial house with little-paned windows, and a portico with benches on each side of the door. And there, on summer evenings, we will sit when dusk comes down the valley and the hum of the city far below us is hushed."

He heard her sigh.

"Is that house just one of your whims, Jimmy?" He felt a pressure on his arm. "Because, if it is, I should concentrate on it."

"You can expect me to show signs of concentration any day now," he answered, laughing. "I know that the rolling restaurants will be a howling success if only they will let me alone."

"But you really are going to be careful, aren't you?" she begged. "Careful about the money, I mean."

"Why certainly."

"Only—" No; her father had said that he would know if anything was going to happen to Jimmy. "Only nothing," she concluded vaguely.

But her tone had alarmed him. It always did alarm him when some one tried to project dollars and cents into his idealism.

"Don't worry, my dear; the success of the rolling restaurants is as inevitable as to-morrow's breakfast," he said. "The Penbury system is based on the theory that the poor can appreciate and will support interesting places to eat in. We purposely don't try to be quick. The poor have just as much right to eat in leisure as the rich. We encourage them to linger. There are enough working men in Corchester to make the restaurants pay."

"But don't you want the rich and well-to-do?"

"Somehow, I hope they won't patronize us," he replied slowly. "I do hope they won't." He glanced down at her. "Mind you, I'm not a howling radical, but this thing does mean a lot to me."

"I understand, Jimmy; I understand."

She saw that it was moving him deeply. It was not often that his emotions came to the surface. But when they did, the old whimsical, purposeless Jimmie threw aside his motley.

They did not speak for a moment. A gust of wind coming up the valley whirled into their little pocket. She shivered. With a sudden rush he gathered her up into his arms and, holding her rigid there, kissed her.

"Come along now," she said, slipping away from him. "It's time we were back."

ALL the way home from the office he walked with a swinging stride. The cold December air made him tingle. Things at the office were going amazingly well. He came into the house whistling.

"That you, James?" His father's voice sounded sepulchral as it rolled out from the library. "If you've a minute to spare, I'd like to talk to you."

Judge Penbury took off his glasses and glanced at him, the way a magistrate glances at a prisoner against whom has been preferred serious charges.

"How are your lunch-wagons coming on, my boy?"

The interest sounded suspicious. However, James took a chair before the fire and, spreading out his feet, replied,

"We are making money."

"Do you think it will last?"

"Certainly it will."

"Making money, I'm afraid, at the expense of some one else's happiness." The judge shook his head. "I wonder if you realize that—realize the injustice you are doing your family and yourself with those lunch-wagons."

"Do you still feel that way after these nine months?"

"Your mother and I are resigned to it." The judge sighed. "I was referring to Claire and to Sylvia Hunter and her father."

"You mean it is hurting our social standing and——"

"Oh, no! Your mother and I never bother our heads about such things. I refer to Claire and to Sylvia Hunter."

"But Sylvia and her father think it's a perfectly glorious idea. They're not one bit averse to my having them."

"That may be. But your sister is averse to your having them."

"I don't see how she can be, if Sylvia isn't."

Judge Penbury rose and closed the door. It was the action of a cautious elderly man.

"I cannot speak for Sylvia Hunter. But I can speak for Claire," he said, returning to the center of the room and taking the chair across from James. "Like any other girl, your sister wants to make a good marriage—good socially, good financially." Judge Penbury made an inclusive gesture. "Your mother and I are not worrying about your picturesque whim in having these lunch-wagons—except that Mr. Hunter might object. Perhaps he does not. Perhaps he feels as your mother and I feel—that you will get bravely over it. But your sister Claire is worried. Several young men are paying her attention. One especially. I would not be surprised if something comes of it. If the match is successful, it will make a brilliant marriage for her." Judge Penbury passed his hand across his brow. "Remember that I look at these things from the view-point of a man well along in years. I can understand her ambition, just as I try to understand your peculiarities. I can see how she feels that the name of Penbury used in connection with these lunch-wagons is a distinct detriment to her matrimonial chances."

While his father was speaking, James gazed out the window. He seemed not to be listening, and yet he heard every word. Finally, he asked quietly,

"Is this chap you're speaking of Charlie Sanderson?"

"Yes."

Jimmy started to laugh.

"Why, father, that's the most incongruous thing I've heard in years! I've known Charlie for ages. Yes; he has good social position and money, and he wears his clothes well and all that sort of thing, but——"

"He's a director of the First National."

"That's because his father is president."

"But he must have some capacity." Judge Penbury was not to be talked down.

"Capacity for rather sharp and reprehensible practises," Jimmy replied testily. "I don't see him for shucks."

"You mean you are opposed to him?"

"Yes, frankly, I am." He stood up and faced his father. "I am, because I have something to say about the man who will marry into this family. Ever since Charlie Sanderson was a kid, he has had the reputation for playing snide tricks—not entirely crooked, but not quite straight. I'm not keen on the idea of Claire marrying a fellow of that sort."

Judge Penbury looked blank.

"Of course, you are old enough to have your own opinions, but I must say that they are diametrically opposed to those held by your mother and me. We have known the Sandersons many, many more years than you have, young man, and I'm willing to pit my judgment against your prejudice."

"All right; I'll do everything in my power to stop Claire marrying Charlie Sanderson. Remember what I said, though." James turned and left the room.

AS HE stepped into the hall, its darkness blinded him. He turned toward the stairs. Something rustled behind him. He looked round. Standing by the front door he made out the shadowy figure of Claire. He heard her sobbing.

"What's the matter?" he called.

She did not reply.

But her fury broke forth the next morning. He came down early before the rest of the family and stepped out into the sunshine of the glass-enclosed breakfast-porch.

Hardly had he sat down than Claire appeared in the doorway. She was looking not quite awake.

"Good-morning, sis," he said.

"I don't see how you can expect me to feel very cordial to you this morning," she replied. "I don't suppose you realize that I happened to be passing in the hall last night when you were in the library talking with father. Charlie Sanderson had come to see me. We were both by the library door when you said what you did."

"I don't deny that I said it," he acknowledged.

"You can't very well, when we heard you." She flung herself down in a chair and glared at him. "Of course, Charlie Sanderson heard you just as distinctly as I did."

"Yes?"

"And he said that, under the conditions, he thought it better not to stay."

Penbury looked out the window. Not for a moment did he regret his stand on Sanderson. He had made an enemy of Claire, though, and this hurt.

"What you think about me now," he began, "is one thing. What you will think about me a year from now will be quite a different matter. I said what I did to father because I believed it absolutely. I cannot see you marrying Charlie Sanderson. One of these days you will realize that I was doing the right thing."

"Rot!" She sniffled. "I hate you and your cheap sentiment."

"Go ahead and hate me if you want. You'll thank me one of these days."

She broke into tears.

"Now, see here, Claire," he said softly; "I'm older than you and I've knocked around with a lot of men. You are infatuated at this moment with Sanderson. I have no illusions about him."

"You've made an enemy of him," she cried, "and he can do you a lot of harm if he wants to!"

"You mean he would deliberately harm the brother of the girl he intends to marry?"

"Well, you've hurt him."

"And he would hurt me and then ask you to marry him?"

"You hurt him first," she answered.

Jimmie thought for a moment.

"All right," he answered; "let him go ahead and crack his whip. He can't hurt me. He's a coward. He can't touch my business and he's got nothing on me personally. If you choose to keep on with him, you do it on your own responsibility. But you'll regret it."

BY JANUARY, the rolling restaurants had more than turned the corner. The executive management of the system had become a complicated and engrossing affair. Besides the originally scornful Miss Garrity there were now two stenographers in the office, and a bookkeeper with an assistant. The office occupied a suite of four rooms and was planning to stretch out and take two more. Down along the railroad was the Penbury warehouse, where extra supplies were kept. A bright-yellow truck with emerald lettering delivered fresh provisions to the wagons each day.

In these past nine months, James Fitzgerald Penbury had acquired a business sense that no one in the past would ever have imagined him possessing. He instituted for his business a system of reports that would make the average efficiency engineer pant with envy. Each morning the bookkeeper laid on his desk large sheets that recorded the total and detailed sales of the previous day. He instituted a series of tests for the location of a wagon, and if none of them was successful, the wagon would be moved to another empty lot in a different section. He could gage the skill of cooks and the size of appetites. He could strike an average of the cups of coffee consumed *per diem* in his rolling restaurants—a perfect tidal wave of coffee—and mountains of hash and prairies of flapjacks and shoals of meat balls and meadows full of fried eggs.

One afternoon early in the new year, he called O'Toole into the office from his place behind the counter of the Cock and Hen, set the accustomed cigars before him and opened up the conversation by saying,

"Michael, I am suffering from a sociological complex which, unfortunately, is superinduced by the declining industrial situation in Corchester."

"And what may that be?" O'Toole asked, without cracking a smile.

"Simply this: We are making a surprising amount of money with the rolling restaurants. On the other hand, factory conditions are not altogether promising in Corchester. Also, I have too much work to do—but of that later. The working classes of this city will not have enough work to do unless things take a turn for the better. Lack of work means lack of money, and lack of money means lack of food. The empty stomach, Michael, makes for unrest. Anarchy is bred when that empty stomach has to be filled at a high price. All the grocers in Corchester are profiteering. The people here are beginning to realize this."

"That's true, Misther Penbury," O'Toole interjected.

"All right, Michael; then here's what I'm going to do: I'm going to shave down my prices. And we'll advertise the fact widely in the papers."

"But that'll cut down profits," O'Toole protested. "I think th' boys would objict to that."

"No; it won't cut down profits." Penbury leveled a finger at him. "And I'm depending on you to convince the boys that this is a good scheme. Now, listen; there are two ways of conducting a business—small sales and large profits, and large sales and small profits. The first is called 'class trade,' the second 'mass trade.' We're in the mass trade. We've got to make our money by increasing the sales, and if we keep on increasing the sales, we can afford to decrease the prices because the volume of business will guarantee sufficient margin of profit. After all, Michael," he concluded, "so long as you men get your share of profits, I don't see where the kick is coming."

"Maybe not," O'Toole agreed; "but——"

"And since the business has increased to the extent it has, what I need is some one to help me manage it." O'Toole's face clouded. "What I need at present is some one to go the rounds and inspect the wagons. I've been making the afternoon inspections and collections for almost ten months. I'm too busy now." Penbury beckoned him closer, whispering, "Michael, will you accept the position of manager?"

"Say that ag'in, Misther Penbury," O'Toole cupped his ear in his hand and leaned forward.

Penbury repeated his proposition.

"Ah, y're a fine young man!" the old Irishman exclaimed, his face suddenly wreathed in smiles.

And thus it came about that Michael O'Toole, for twenty years head bartender at the Congress Hotel on Main Street, rose to be executive manager of the Penbury system of rolling restaurants. By his suave and jovial arguments, the other day and night cooks were persuaded to share with Penbury the astute idea of lowering prices. Meanwhile, also, he was taking much of the load off from Penbury's shoulders, which meant that that young man had more time not to dream his dreams.

From the first hour in which he had conceived these rolling restaurants, James Fitzgerald Penbury stood in mortal terror lest there should happen to him that which happens to most business men. He was desperately afraid that under the pressure of work he should lose his imagination, his capacity for dreaming vast dreams, for beholding the poetry and the drama and the touching comedy in the every-day life about him. Once loosed from the shackles of constant attendance at his office, he fled to the green meadows of his dreams the way the young lamb flees to pleasant pastures. Sometimes he would be with Sylvia, listening to her play the big organ. Sometimes they would tramp mile on mile across, country. Occasionally he would go alone but when he went alone, he almost invariably stuck to city streets—to the welter of tenements and the grim factory streets. Something about their utter lack of beauty stimulated him. He was pursuing an idea. Then, one night in March it came to him.

He was striding down Grierson Street, head up in the keenly cutting wind. At the foot of the street, several blocks on, sprawled the vast reaches of the Kemp Saw Works. As his eyes traced its innumerable roof-lines, his mind's eye was tracing a big dream.

"A man can live without shirts and tobacco and hats and candy and even shoes," he muttered as he trod along, "but he can't live without food. Food is a necessity. People need it. The working people need it badly. And the working people are in the majority. They appreciate good food, well served in pleasant places. Those are the principles on which my business is founded. Can I build on them? Can I spread the rolling restaurants all over the United States?" As the thought gathered strength, he walked faster and faster. He struck the pavement determinedly with his stick. "Yes; by God, I can!"

He stopped short in his tracks, pulled off his hat, and, turning about to face the blocks of sleeping tenements huddled round the works, shouted up to the pulsing stars,

"Yes; and, by God, I will!"

"THE big idea is this," he pronounced solemnly, laying down his fork. "Others have dreamed of a chain of restaurants; others have conceived of a chain of lunch-rooms. Those places are permanently located. But mine is a nomad dream. I plan to cover the empty lots of this vast country with rolling restaurants, to make the suburbs of America palpitate with peregrinating centers of gastronomic delights."

"Oh, Jimmy, that is a marvelous phrase! And so early in the morning, too!" Sylvia clasped her hands wistfully. " 'To make the suburbs of America palpitate with peregrinating centers of gastronomic delights!' " The imitation poured like a melody from her lips.

THEY were sitting in the Hunter breakfast-room, whither he had hurried the next morning. Jim admitted that he had not stopped for breakfast. He also confessed that he had taken the liberty of asking O'Toole to come there, because he wanted her opinion of him. She said she was dying to meet the marvelous Michael O'Toole. With her own hand she laid the cloth and made him a breakfast. And while he ate it, in the red-and-golden sunlight filtering through the curtains, she sat opposite him as mistress of the toaster and coffee-urn.

"And don't you see," he continued, spreading a generous coat of marmalade over a slab of toast, "the secret of my success lies in the fact that my restaurants do roll? They actually peregrinate! If they don't pay in one lot, I move them to another. If the puny-souled owner of the lot demands more rent, I move my wagon. Apply that same principle to twenty-five or thirty American cities, and what do you have? You have a magnificent system without paying out vast sums for the privilege of being where you are, and, with the capacity for going wherever and whenever you please."

"You do really mean to spread to twenty-five cities?" she exclaimed.

"I don't see why we shouldn't spread to fifty or a hundred," he replied, biting a neat half-moon out of the marmalade and toast. "Once you establish a principle, it can be applied almost anywhere. Of course, the principle has to be adjusted to different times and places," he continued, "just as jokes on the stage are adapted to suit local tastes."

"Jimmy, aren't you getting a bit facetious?"

"No—really! Not in the least." He ran his fingers through his carroty hair and grinned. "I have simply been expressing some thoughts that, if you have patience, will lead up to a big point in the expansion of the rolling restaurants."

"Then I will be patient," she answered, folding her hands in front of her.

"What was I saying?" he asked absently.

"You were saying that a principle has to be adjusted to different times and places."

"Oh, yes! In order to succeed, a principle must meet the requirements of time and place. May I smoke now?"

Sylvia rose and went to the serving-table for a match. She struck it and helped him light his cigarette.

"There are two problems—a condition that I'll probably have to meet and master. First, raise the money." He took a whiff of the cigarette. "Second, study the local gastronomic prejudice of various localities. In certain places people prefer one kind of dish and in another, another. To the Bostonian there is something positively sacramental about a codfish ball. You can reduce almost any Philadelphian to tears of gratitude by saying that the best breakfast-dish in the world is scrapple. Down South the mere mention of beaten biscuits will throw a man into a frenzy of local patriotism."

Sylvia clapped her hands to her face laughing.

"And so you're going to make the codfish ball sacramental and the beaten biscuit your *pièce de résistance?*"

"That's it exactly!" He brought his hand down on the table with a hearty thump. "But in order to make this expansion intelligently, I have to look over the ground; I have to find out what political and physical and economic conditions exist in the various cities. And it will be necessary for me——"

A step sounded along the gallery. The maid announced O'Toole.

"Show him in here." Sylvia turned again to Jimmy. "You mean you'll have to go away for a time?" Her eyes filled with anxiety.

"For a couple of months at least." He took up her hand and kissed it.

With a jump she sat up and gave a quick pat to her hair. Steps sounded along the gallery again. Jim pushed back his chair. In the doorway stood O'Toole.

For a moment neither Penbury nor Sylvia spoke, for it was an unexpected O'Toole they saw. He was wearing lemon-yellow gloves and spats. He carried a cane and a brand-new derby. And he wore a cutaway that was evidently fresh from the hands of the tailor.

On the strength of being made manager of the rolling restaurants, O'Toole had invested in a Sunday suit that he thought befitting the office. He had rushed home to get into it for the occasion.

"Mighty good of you to come out here, Michael'!' Jim managed. "Let me present Miss Hunter."

O'Toole did not offer his hand, but he bowed profoundly and made a sweeping flourish with his derby and yellow gloves.

"Miss Hunter," he said, with another profound bow, "I have th' honor."

Then he took the chair she offered him, and, placing his new derby, stick and yellow gloves carefully on the floor beside him, leaned forward with the serious and expectant air of one who has come on great business.

"I have just been telling Miss Hunter of a wonderful plan I have for the rolling restaurants," Penbury began, "and I'd just reached the point where I said I would have to solve two problems—looking over the ground and raising the money." He turned to her. "I am going to borrow fifty thousand dollars to start this expansion on."

"Where, Jimmy?" Sylvia broke in anxiously.

"The bank, of course—the First National, where I keep my accounts and they know me. Won't that be all right?" He thought he saw a strange anxiety in her face. Back to her flooded the warning her father had sounded a year ago.

There came an awkward pause. O'Toole finally broke it. Carefully he pulled out a handkerchief from his upper pocket and wiped his brow.

"Well, Misther Penbury, that's an awful big mouthful y're bitin' off."

"You're not afraid that he can't do it?" Sylvia asked, looking up into his face.

"Well—ah——"

"Because he can," she said determinedly. "I am sure he can."

"Young lady, it does me heart good to hear yeh talk loike that." O'Toole leaned back in his chair and beamed upon her. "Thim's th' kind of words that whin a woman spakes thim she makes her man do big things. Y're right; Misther Penbury can put this over. I know he can. An' I'm back of him to th' drop of th' hat."

"There is only one thing I feel sorry about, Michael," Penbury put in. "This trip will take me away for about two months. And——"

"An' I know a certain little party that'll be missing yeh," he interrupted.

Penbury colored and smiled. O'Toole swung round in his chair.

"Miss Hunter, I want to tell yeh wan thing: I'm an old married man. But in me day I was a great hand with th' ladies. I know th' tender feelin'. An' I want to tell yeh that if this here bean-pole, carroty-headed grandson of an Irishman ain't lovin' yeh more whin he comes back than he did before he left—then he ain't worth th' havin'. So don't yeh go worryin' about that. Keep yerself busy. Play with th' other boys. If yeh need any help, yeh know where yeh can find Michael O'Toole."

And then O'Toole did what no other man could have done more beautifully; he lifted Sylvia's delicate soft hand into his old work-grimed paw and patted it.

PENBURY finally started the expansion of the rolling restaurants in Atlanta. The two months he had intended being away from Corchester extended into four. Meanwhile, the Atlanta wagons were established with all the care and acumen with which he had begun the original Corchester system.

Instead of naming them after taverns, the Atlanta wagons were called after drinks for which the South had been famous—Planter's Punch, Tom Collins, Mint Julep, Bourbon, Egg-nog, Gin Dazie, the Colonel's Delight, and Moonshine. Each of these was decorated in a fashion reminiscent of those memorable potions, with distinctive curtains, wall decorations, pictures and counters.

The menus had a quaint old-time flavor. They were based on old plantation recipes. Instead of meat balls, the special gastronomic delights that would tickle the palates of discerning citizens of Atlanta were fried chicken and beaten biscuits. "The harder you beat 'em the lighter they get"—so ran his Southern slogan.

HAVING gotten these wagons well established, he was ready to give himself the treat he had threatened that morning when he unfolded his plans to Sylvia. He now began his survey of the dog-wagons in the cities on the way from Atlanta to Corchester. An alimentary buccaneer, he tried them all—Memphis, Savannah, Louisville, Pittsburgh, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia. Ahead there still lay New York. After that—home. It would take him a couple of days to cover the metropolis, he figured.

One night—a torrid night in late July—he stepped out from the subway into that vast, seething civilized wilderness, the Bronx. When he had walked what seemed a good twenty blocks, he began to reach open territory. The buildings grew smaller and the shops fewer. A few blocks more and he encountered open lots. On the fringe of what appeared to be an open wilderness stretching away to infinity, he saw the white walls and glistening lights of a lunch-wagon. The next moment he was climbing the steps of the White Palace, James Kilpatrick, proprietor.

Thus far, he had eaten in or inspected some three hundred lunch-wagons. He had tasted vile food, adulterated food, and fair. But he had never found his ideal—the perfect and spotless lunch-wagon.

Pushing back the door of Kilpatrick's, he gave a sudden gasp. Were his eyes deceiving him? Was he dreaming? Here was a place, spotless, clean—like a new-made kitchen or the operating-room of a big hospital. White-painted walls without, white-tiled walls within; white-tiled floor and ceiling; long white-porcelain counter, like a gigantic bathtub; glistening pots; no cooking-odors; good light, and behind the counter the rosy-cheeked, smiling face of a middle-aged man whose origin could have been no other place than Erin.

"Come in, sir," said the man, making the air melodious with a rich brogue. "Come in an' be comfortable."

"Indeed I will, Mr. ——"

"Kilpatrick's my name." He extended a hand and motioned Jim to a stool in front of the counter.

"You have a beautiful wagon here, Mr. Kilpatrick," he said, gazing in admiration about him.

"I'm glad you like it. Only opened here last week. Trade's slow to begin. It'll pick up, though."

"That's to be expected," Penbury replied. "And if it's not bothering you too much, may I have an order of wheat cakes with a coffee on the side?"

As Kilpatrick set about cooking, Penbury saw that he was an old hand at the game.

"You cook as though you've been in the business a long time, sir."

"Going on thirty years now. Not exactly th' restaurant business, though." Kilpatrick picked up a flapjack, tossed it above his head nonchalantly, caught it and restored it to the griddle. "I was in th' liquor business before prohibition set in," he said, glancing up. "Thirty years an' every day of it clean trade. Never a man with a package ever got another drink in my place. Before they closed us down, I sold out an' took up this here business."

With a deft move he laid Penbury's order on a plate and slid it along the counter. It came to a dead stop directly in front of him. With equal accuracy he delivered butter and a jug of maple-sirup. But his crowning skill was shown when, with one quick twist of the wrist, he sent a full cup of coffee to within an inch of Penbury's plate without spilling a drop.

"I see you're a bartender of the old school." Admiration glistened in Penbury's eye.

"Yes, sir; I am." Kilpatrick moved out a stool from beneath the counter and sat down. "Many's the time I've slid a hooker th' whole length of th' bar with never so much as makin' a ripple on it. That's art, lemme tell you." He gestured with an expressive index-finger. "You can't just pick it up."

Penbury cut a segment of the buttered and siruped cakes and slowly raised it to his mouth. They melted as though they had been made of thin air.

"How's them?" Kilpatrick asked.

"They're the best cakes I've ever eaten—my own included."

A broad smile of satisfaction spread across the owner's face. It was worth while serving so discerning a customer.

"Why don't you specialize in these?" Penbury asked, when he had finished a second segment. "Get a reputation round the neighborhood for them. You'll be making money in no time. Suggest them when people come in here. I'm speaking from experience."

"You're in this business?"

"Yes; pretty deep in it." With that introduction, Penbury began to explain the system and peculiar lure of the rolling restaurants. He spoke of his ex-bartenders and O'Toole, of how the wagons were furnished, of his specialties, of the parade, of how he had expanded his system to the South.

"Golly, but that's fine! You got th' right idea." Kilpatrick stopped and reflected for a moment. "D'you mind if I try some of them things here?"

"Go to it!" Penbury set down his coffee-cup. Then he took it up again and looked at the dregs with a professional eye. "You're using seconds in this coffee. It would pay you to cut them out and spend just a little more for a good registered brand. I've got a big reputation in Corchester for my coffee."

Kilpatrick produced the stub of a pencil and noted down the name and address of the firm from which Jim bought his coffee.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind giving me a hint or two on the way *you* plan to run things," Penbury ventured. "I see that you have a table for ladies over there. I never made any special reservation for ladies—never counted on their trade."

Kilpatrick leaned across the counter and pointed to the table in the corner. It and its two chairs were enameled white, and above it hung the neatly lettered sign: "This Table Reserved for Ladies."

"Mister, it's this way: You never can't tell when one of them is goin' to drop in. An' when they do"—he shrugged expressively—"you can't ask 'em to sit up to a bar like a man. What's more, you gotta take a lady's food to her. Nothin' too good for th' ladies, I say, so I serves 'em meself—an' I gives 'em a napkin, too."

From a corner in the counter he drew forth a bundle of brand-new cotton napkins. On the corner of each was sewn in green, "Kilpatrick's White Palace."

"I figured," he concluded, "that this here little attention would be worth th' expense. An' if they take 'em away, it'll be an advertisement."

"You're right. Perfectly right!" Penbury replied, with professional gravity. "Little attentions like that build up good will, and good will means good business."

For some minutes they talked on, swapping ideas and experiences. Finally Penbury glanced up at the clock over the door and saw that it was half-past eleven. That reminded him that he had not written Sylvia before he left the hotel. Why not do it right here?

"Do you mind my sitting over there at the ladies' table and writing a letter?" he asked.

"Help yourself, brother," Kilpatrick replied cheerfully. "An' here's th' things to write with. You can't ask for nothin' I haven't got." From the counter drawer he produced sheets of paper, envelopes, a pen and a bottle of ink. The paper bore the address:

THE WHITE PALACE
JAMES KILPATRICK, PROP.

"That's for th' ladies, too," Kilpatrick remarked, with pride.

HE COULD not recall when he had written Sylvia under more pleasant circumstances, and he proceeded to make himself comfortable—dug into his pockets and produced a handful of cigarettes and a copy of Robert Burns.

He was in the habit of carrying a book of poetry secreted about his person. One never knows when he will need poetry, he figured. A poem will protect a man from what a pistol cannot. This thin-paper edition of Burns had been his constant solace on the trip. Seeking the final spur of stimulation for Sylvia's letter, he turned its pages.

Ah, what a fine old lad Bobbie was! So consistently a lover, so fervid, so tender, so human. What's the matter with the human race that we haven't such lovers nowadays? Too much bent on making money? Or perhaps too much reform in the air and the good things of life being looked upon askance? Well, he knew one thing—he leaned back in his chair—he would always be a lover to Sylvia. He would fill her life so full of romance and love-making that each day would be more wonderful than the one before.

With this thought, he seized the pen, and, as if inspired, began writing. The pen fairly flew across the paper.

> MY BONNIE LASS: May the sun always shine upon you! May your lips always tinkle with laughter and your eyes open to behold lovely things! For you are my own, my veriest own, and I would that always life give you its fullest measure of happiness—heap your lap with blessings and make you strong with insatiable endeavors!
>
> All these days that I have been away from you I have felt you by my side, guardian angel that you are! In moments of danger you have suddenly snatched me away. You have stood between me and fear, like a warrior with a terrible sword drawn to defend me. You have sung me to sleep, as a nurse with a little child, on nights when sleep was far from me. And in my going hither and thither among all kinds of men you have whispered counsels, have formed the right words at the right time and guided my gestures.
>
> And yet, beloved, there have been days when I fairly scourged myself with loneliness, as an ascetic scourged himself with the discipline, that I may be more worthy of the heaven that is in your smile. And I have worn you in my heart, as a mystic wears some sacred trinket on his breast—to gain the cleansing and the strength that no man of himself can accomplish.
>
> So you have been to me, in all these solitary times, my guardian angel, my discipline, my dreams of heaven, my sacred trinket and my song. Thy,
>
> JIMMY.

He laid down the pen. Phew! It left him exhausted. And yet he felt exalted, cleansed and strengthened.

Slowly he folded the letter and slipped it into an envelope. He was about to seal the envelope when the door banged.

"COME in, miss," he heard Kilpatrick say cheerily. "Take th' table. Make yourself comfortable."

Penbury turned. In the doorway stood a girl. She was flushed and evidently excited. She fell back against the door as if exhausted.

"Ah, ah, won't you, ah—sit down?" Penbury exclaimed, jumping to his feet.

"Thanks," she replied, accepting the support of his arm. "That's awful kind of you."

As she sat down, Penbury slid the letter into the back of the book and began pushing aside the paper and writing-things. She thanked him with a smile—an amazingly beautiful smile. He didn't know when he had seen so engaging a smile. She was well dressed. He noticed, too, that she had red hair; it gave him a bond of sympathy with her.

"I take it that you are dining here," he remarked politely, when she seemed composed. "Mayn't I suggest your trying some of Mr. Kilpatrick's griddle-cakes?"

"They sound good," she replied, drawing off her gloves slowly.

"And coffee?"

She nodded.

"Wheat cakes and coffee, Mr. Kilpatrick," he called. Kilpatrick turned to his griddle.

She opened her bag and began the usual dab and dash of make-up. Jim watched her. It was quite amusing and he would have commented on it—only, it seemed too personal. Finally he asked,

"Do you live in the Bronx?" The Bronx seemed a fairly innocuous topic for conversation. She nodded. "I don't suppose you were born here."

"Why do you say that?" She cast on him a strangely appraising look, seemed to take in at one glance his carroty red hair, freckled face, finely molded features and long, esthetic hands. "How did you know I wasn't born here?"

"Because I've yet to meet a New Yorker who was born in New York. New York is where Americans go when they've grown up."

"After to-night's experience I'm not quite sure that I've grown up," she replied cryptically. It was evident that she wanted to pique his curiosity—and he permitted her to. "I don't think I've ever had a queerer experience," she added.

"New York is the place *par excellence* to have queer experiences," he rejoined.

"But this one was so childish!" She threw up her hands. "I simply ran away from him—that was all. I didn't want to go with him—like a kid playing hooky from school." This sounded very mysterious. Penbury held his peace. "Most of these johnnies will play round with a girl for a while, and then we seem to die on them. But this one—why, he's been the most devoted lover for the past six months. I guess he was too devoted."

"You're on the stage, aren't you?"

"Yes; Winter Garden."

At this juncture Kilpatrick came with the flapjacks, spread a napkin under the plate and laid another beside it.

"He's come down for me every single night for the past six months," she chatted on. "A lovely car with nickel mounts. And money? He doesn't count the cost for a minute. We were on the way up to Rye for a little supper at a road-house."

As she was neglecting her supper, Penbury leaned across and deftly spread butter on top of each cake, then carefully poured the maple-sirup over them.

"Thanks so much!" She took up the fork and began eating.

"Perhaps you'll enjoy this just as much as you would have enjoyed the other."

"Much more, old dear!" She laughed familiarly. "I simply couldn't have gone with him. I couldn't! When he stopped at a garage for gas, I skipped out the other side of the car and ran down the street. Isn't that a joke!"

"Will he forgive you?" he asked.

"They always do."

Penbury smiled at the strange philosophy.

"I can furnish you with one thing," he said, picking up the volume of Burns, "that I bet you can't get in any road-house. D'you like poetry?"

"I love it—Robert Service and all that kind."

"This isn't Robert Service. This is Robert Burns. You go ahead with your supper and I'll read to you. You know Bobbie Burns—the Scotch farmer-boy, who loved every girl who came his way and used to write poems to them. Here's one to Handsome Nell. She was the daughter of a blacksmith:

"O, once I love'd a bonnie lass,
Aye, and I love her still;
And whilst that virtue warms my breast,
I'll love my handsome Nell."

Kilpatrick, who was scrubbing a pot, stopped and leaned over the counter. Penbury was reading the lines with a warm, rich burr and accompanying it with gestures. When he reached the last lines:

"For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without control."

the girl laid down her fork and shouted:

"Grand! Oh, that was grand!"

"It was, miss," Kilpatrick augmented.

"Go on!" she cried.

He read "No Churchman Am I" and "Green Grow the Rushes." Each received warm acclaim. Then he read "The Banks o' Doon" and closed the book. The recital was over. Kilpatrick waited expectantly for another poem, then turned to his pot.

"Read another," she whispered, leaning over toward him. Penbury raised an eyebrow and shook his head. "Go on. Read just one to me. Never mind him." She nodded over her shoulder toward the proprietor. "Just one—to me."

"Just one, then." Penbury turned the pages, stopping now and then to make sure of his poem. "Here it is," he said. "'My Love Is Like a Red, Red Rose'."

The girl set down her coffee-cup and put her elbows on the table as he began.

"My love is like a red, red rose,
  That's newly sprung in June.
My love is like the melodie,
  That's sweetly play'd in tune."

His voice, soft, caressing, wound a spell about her. She closed her eyes and surrendered herself to its tender beauty.

"As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
  So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
  Till a' the seas gang dry.

"Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
  And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
  While the sands o' life shall run.

"And fare thee well, my only love!
  And fare thee well a while!
And I will come again, my love,
  Tho' 'twere ten thousand mile!"

HE CLOSED the book and folded his hands over it. Slowly, as though blind, she reached out and let her finger-tips touch his for an instant. Then she withdrew them and opened her eyes.

"That was just the loveliest thing!" she sighed.

"I'm glad you liked it," he replied impersonally.

"It made me feel all clean inside."

He smiled and nodded.

"I'll tell you what," he said suddenly. "Would you like to have this book? It's a favorite of mine, but I'd gladly give it to you."

"Oh, I'd just love it!"

He opened the book to the fly-leaf. There was written his name and address. He took up the pen. "Your name?"

"Madeleine Smith," she answered.

Under "James Fitzgerald Penbury,

Corchester, Mass.," he wrote: "To Miss Madeleine Smith. In recollection of a pleasant evening."

He handed her the book opened and she read the inscription.

"I'm so proud," she murmured.

He smiled and picked up his hat.

"I'm awfully sorry I have to go," he said, giving her his hand.

"So am I. You made me feel so—so—happy."

Jim nodded.

"Good-night, Mr. Kilpatrick." He took the hand that the old Irishman wiped on his apron. "I've had a pleasant evening, with two of the pleasantest people I've ever met, in the nicest lunch-wagon this side of Corchester."

The next moment he was out in the street.

An hour later, when he asked for his mail at the desk, the clerk handed him a letter. It was in Sylvia's handwriting. Suddenly it occurred to him that he had left his letter to Sylvia in the back of the Bobbie Burns. The sight of Sylvia's writing sent a pang of regret through him. And he wouldn't be seeing her for two more days! He crammed the letter in his pocket and, passing the desk, called to the clerk,

"Please get me tickets for Corchester on the ten-o'-clock train to-morrow."

PAST Hartford, the train-boy brought in the Corchester *Herald*. Penbury bought one with anxious delight. He hadn't seen the old sheet for months. It was good to get back to its pages. He turned the pages fondly. Most of the news was fresh to him. There was some labor trouble at the Kemp Saw Works; the Congress Hotel was planning to put up an annex; his father was slated for a Fourth-of-July speech to the American Legion. On the society page his eye caught the heading:

DOG-WAGON DINNER

MISS HUNTER LEADS LOCAL SOCIETY IN NEW FAD

The story intimated that Corchester society was given quite a jolt last night by being invited by Miss Sylvia Hunter to a select little dinner-party in the Brimming Bowl, one of Mr. James Fitzgerald Penbury's rolling restaurants. There were sixteen in the party, and the names were given. Mr. O'Toole, manager of the Penbury system, was in charge. The article concluded with the gossip that since Miss Hunter had set the pace, Corchester would undoubtedly follow her lead in patronizing the wagons.

At first Penbury laughed at the idea. Gradually he began to take it seriously. What did Sylvia mean by doing this? Didn't he tell her once that his wagons were for the patronage of the working classes alone? It annoyed him, and he couldn't quite get the annoyance out of his head.

He reached Corchester just after dinner-time, sent his bags up to the house, telephoned O'Toole, and, having called up Sylvia, headed for the Hunter place.

As he approached the gate, he began to grow anxious. He began wondering if Sylvia were the same Sylvia he had left months ago. Would he still love her as much? He was quite excited by the time he reached the house.

"Is that you, Jimmy?" The crisp melody of her voice rang out as he came into the hall. It sounded strangely far away.

He looked round the big room half hidden in the shadows of dusk. As his eyes turned toward the gallery stairs, he caught a glimpse of some one tiptoeing down the shadows. A sudden burst of yellow frock, the glint of blue-stockinged ankles, the flash of her hands. Then her face. Yes; it was the same Sylvia. He ran forward to her.

"Jimmy!" she cried, jumping into his arms from the steps. He caught her and held her close. "Oh, Jimmy boy, it's been so long! I thought you'd never come back. Did you miss me?"

"Every day I missed you more," he whispered, his eyes closed, his body lulled by the nearness of her.

"Sometimes, when I was alone, I used to pretend that you were here." A thrill ran through her lithe little body. "I used to play to you. I'd pretend I heard you coming, and I'd look round suddenly—and you weren't there!"

"And this time you looked around—and here I am!"

Slowly she lifted her face. Her eyes closed as his lips came closer—a moment's ecstacy. Then suddenly he held her at arm's length.

"See here, young lady," he said; "what's all this I hear about your leading local society in a new fad?"

"That dinner?" She shook her head. "Oh, that dinner was quite my own idea."

"You might have written a fellow about it."

"But I did write you. Day before yesterday. Didn't you get my letter?"

"Letter? Letter?" He looked puzzled.

"I didn't know you were coming home so soon, so I addressed it to New York. It was posted here early in the evening. You should have received it last night."

"Let's see; where was I last night?" He wrinkled his brow. "I left the hotel before seven—went to the Bronx—and—oh, yes!"

HE STARTED rummaging through his pockets. A handkerchief, some matches, cigarettes, some papers—and Sylvia's letter, the one he had received last night when he returned to the hotel.

"Oh, Jimmy, how could you?"

"I'm—I'm awfully sorry." He dropped his eyes. He was thoroughly ashamed. "When this letter was handed me, the sight of your writing made me so homesick for you that I forgot——"

"Me?"

"No; not you. I forgot the letter." He blushed furiously.

She did not reply. Her silence shamed him. He felt chastened and very much humiliated.

"I'll keep it and read it later," he said, slipping it into his wallet.

"No; never mind. Just tear it up."

"I'd much prefer to keep it." He put the wallet into his pocket and looked up. Her eyes danced with tantalizing brightness. She had conquered.

"I'll forgive you," she said. Then, in the next breath, "Come sit out on the terrace, and I'll tell you all about the party."

"I gather it's now going to be the smart thing to dine at the rolling restaurants," he answered, taking a place beside her on the terrace bench.

"It certainly is. Claire threatens to give a party in Hole in th' Wall," she chatted on. "A costume dinner at the wagon and then home to dance."

"Hm," he grunted. "I don't know whether I quite like it. Perhaps I'm a little jay to think that only the working classes should patronize the wagons."

"But we're not keeping the working classes out of the wagons," she protested. "We go there at night."

"And the business men crowd them at noon. So O'Toole told me over the 'phone a few minutes ago. I don't see where the working man gets much of a chance. Why did you do it?" His tone was quite angry.

For several moments she did not reply. Then her hand crept into his.

"Little stupid!" she whispered. "I'll have to explain it. And, like a woman, I'm going to blame it on you."

"Really?"

"Yes. Didn't you borrow all that money?"

"But what's that got to do with your giving a party in one of the lunch-wagons?"

"Again, beloved, I am going to answer you like a woman—circuitously. Follow me carefully. Then, if at the end I am wrong, you may discipline me as you will. First, you borrowed thirty thousand dollars." She ticked this off on her thumb. "Then you go to Atlanta and spend a great part of this thirty thousand dollars establishing lunch-wagons. The more I thought of this the more it made me apprehensive. What if the bank, for some reason or another, should call that loan? What if——"

"It would be embarrassing for the moment," he broke in.

"That's what I was afraid of. Then rumors of this would come to daddy's ears—and I don't know what he would say."

"This may be true, Sylvia," he protested, "but what in thunder has it to do with your giving that party?"

"I simply wanted to start something. I wanted society people here in Corchester to patronize the wagons, because I wanted the best people in the city to appreciate them."

"But their occasional patronage wouldn't roll up such a great profit that I could face a called loan." He shook his head. "I'm sorry; but I don't follow you, my dear."

"You don't? Listen! Their patronage means their sympathy and good will. You can't do without this. You already have the good will of the working classes, but it is only good will. The good will of society is a powerful factor. It can be turned into cold, hard cash if need be. *Now*, do you understand?"

"Yes, yes!" He nodded his head; then suddenly he became alive. "But what amazes me is where you learned all this. What gave you the idea?"

"I thought every bit of it out for myself."

He seized her wrist and held it.

"Sylvia! Sylvia! What a blessed girl you are! Only you could have thought out such a thing. I'm—I'm—well, it's just like you."

"I'm so glad," she sighed. "Before this, all I could do was to sit round and admire you and say how brilliant your schemes were. I'm awfully glad I could put this over on my own."

"Yes; because it makes you kind of a partner."

"That's what O'Toole said. That—and some other things."

"What kind of other things?" he pressed.

"O Jimmy, you are stupid to-night!" she laughed. "You-and-me things, of course."

"I was just coming to those," he answered, taking up her hand.

"THE next move is New York," Jimmy remarked, as he let the spoon clatter into the bowl. "Since the Atlanta wagons are well on their way, I see no reason why we shouldn't take a try at the big city."

"You'd jump from Atlanta to New York?" O'Toole countered.

"Yes; I think I would," he replied reflectively. "All successful businesses must eventually go to the metropolis. We won't be big until we do it."

O'Toole pondered this statement. He felt in a pondering mood. It was well past midnight, and outside the November air had a bitter nip. The grill seat of the Last Card was comfortable and warm. Penbury and he had been busy at the office all evening going over accounts, and their choice of hot milk and toast was the perfect afterwork dish.

"But how can you make a dent in that big town?" O'Toole finally asked.

"There are two ways, Michael—make a splash, which we can't afford, or absorb somebody else's business. I'm going to absorb." Penbury ran his hands through his carroty hair and smiled. "When I was in New York, I came across a man by the name of Kilpatrick. I told you about him. He ran the White Palace, in the Bronx. Since then he has expanded to two other White Palaces. We'll buy out Kilpatrick and make him New York manager."

"But are you sure we can swing it?"

"Yes; if I can get an extension of my loan at the First National," Penbury replied, "and I think I can. Banks don't loan money to people who have no assets. We had assets. That's why we raised the thirty thousand. To-day we have more assets. We can reasonably expect that they will extend our loan and even give us more for the asking."

"High finance!" O'Toole murmured. But he had become accustomed to his boss's dreams and nothing surprised him now.

The cook took away their dishes and they started filling pipes. As no one else was in the wagon, and the grill-seat of the Last Card had high settles, they were private in their corner and out of sight.

Their pipes loaded, they stretched out on the seats and smoked in silence. Penbury blew rings that expanded the way his rolling restaurants were going to expand.

"This fellow Kilpatrick had a lot of good ideas," he said, after a moment. "Napkins with the name of the wagon sewed on, and writing-paper and a table reserved for ladies."

"I don't mind th' paper and th' napkins," O'Toole answered meditatively, "but I'm agin th' table fer ladies."

"Oh, Michael, you're getting old."

"No, Misther Penbury; I ain't," O'Toole gestured vehemently with his pipe. "Whin Michael O'Toole's too old to keep an eye on th' ladies, he's gonna go on th' penshion list. He'll be done fer. Remimber, Misther Penbury, if it wasn't for me a-helpin' that lovely little lady of yours, maybe this here society trade 'd never got started."

"Yes; and that lovely little lady has always given you credit for what you did." Penbury turned in the seat and laid down his pipe. "Speaking of that, Michael, reminds me of something you can do for me."

"What's that?"

"Burn a candle for me the next time you go into a church."

"And what fer?"

"To wish me luck." Penbury took up the pipe again. "I'm going to speak to her father shortly. Not that I anticipate any trouble; only——"

"Bah, ye boy; go on!" O'Toole waved away an imaginary trouble. "Don't go botherin' yer head about her father. He's fer you all right."

They smoked on for a time. Then O'Toole leaned forward.

"Forgive me fer askin', but how is yer little sister gettin' on with that there Sanderson?"

"I guess it's all off," Penbury answered slowly. "And I'm responsible for it. I was opposed from the start. While I was away, she evidently had a change of heart. Sanderson seems to have faded into the background."

O'Toole nodded solemnly.

"I tell yeh why I was askin'. It mayn't be any of my affairs, but I see things that maybe yeh don't, and I hears things. An' th' things I sees and hears ain't the sort that goes with a young man that's thinkin' of marryin' into th' Penbury family."

"What sort of things, Mike?"

"Well now, I said enough," O'Toole answered, puckering up his lips. "Don't ast me to go into details. Only, I'm glad yer little sister's changed her mind."

"But, Mike, I think that——"

SOME one came into the wagon at that point. The door banged.

"Sit down, Henry," a voice called—a slightly uncertain voice. "Sit down and make yourself at home in Mr. James Fizzleberry Penbury's rolling restaurant."

Jim leaned out the side of the grill-seat and waved to O'Toole to be quiet.

"The grand owner of dog-wagons!" the voice went on. "The big slob!"

"Speak of the devil," Penbury whispered. "It's Sanderson and another fellow. They've had a drop too much."

"That's one of th' things I bin seein'," O'Toole answered, with a nod.

Sanderson and his friend ordered griddlecakes, and while they were being cooked, Sanderson kept up a running fire of conversation. It seemed that Mrs. Somebody, who was giving a party in the Knickerbocker Bar that night, had neglected to ask him. Consequently he was sore.

"Insulted me," he said. "That woman had the nerve to insult me!"

His friend Henry made a reply of no consequence.

"And you know why?" Sanderson asked. "Why, because—lemme whisper.'" He whispered in a loud and audible tone. "Because Claire Penbury was being invited. And little Claire is through with me. For which I have to thank her big brother."

"Ump, ump," Henry conceded.

"He said things about me, he did—about me, Charles Sanderson. Think of that? Called me a crook, he did. Said I did snide tricks. Not altogether rep—rep—reprehensible. That was the very word he used." Sanderson laughed beerily. "But it didn't make any difference. What did I care? She's a nice little girl and all that; only, I wasn't going to marry her——"

Penbury's hand closed round the edge of the table. His face went white. O'Toole moved to the corner of the seat. Sanderson kept up his "whispering."

"Think I'd marry a girl whose brother runs dog-wagons? Not me! I've not got that low, and I'll never get that low." Sanderson pounded the counter with emphasis. "Mind you, perfectly respectable family, the Penburys. Nothing aristocratic, like the Hunters or——"

O'Toole started to get up. Penbury seized his arm and dragged him down.

"Or the Sandersons. Nope." Sanderson swallowed some coffee and tried to light a cigarette. Henry assisted him. "Thanks, Henry." Puff, puff. "The thing I can't get through this old head of mine is what Sylvia Hunter—nice girl like that—sees in him."

The cook, who was polishing a pan, glanced round angrily at Sanderson.

"Yeh better cut that kinda stuff out," he said.

"I'll say what I damn please about him and everybody I want to!" Sanderson shouted.

"No, yeh won't!" O'Toole sprang to his feet and was out of the grill corner before Penbury could get up. "Yeh'll take that back, young fellah!"

"Never! Never, if I live to be five hundred." Sanderson swayed in his seat. His eyes half-closed, he did not look at the two men standing before him. His rumpled evening clothes and mussed hair bore witness to the evening having already been full of incident.

"Yes; you'll apologize, Charlie," Penbury said determinedly, "and you'll do it now."

Sanderson opened his eyes to a crack and gazed stupidly at him.

"So you're here, James Fitzgerald Penbury. Been listening in, eh?"

"Yes; and I've heard enough from you. Now, you apologize to me and get out of this wagon."

"I'll do nothing of the kind." Sanderson turned to his friend. "Will I, Henry?" Henry, who was not quite so drunk as Sanderson, advised him to apologize. "No; I won't do anything of the sort. He called me a crook and said I did re-rep-rephensible things, and I'm damned if I apologize."

"Well then, you'll get out of this wagon!" Penbury made a move to take his arm. Sanderson flung him off. Henry tried to pull him away, but Sanderson had seized a coffee-cup. He flung it at Penbury. It missed his mark. The cup crashed against the farther wall. O'Toole made a reach for him, but Sanderson dodged it. He backed up against the counter. He had a knife in his hand—an ordinary table-knife.

"Come one step farther!" he shouted. "Come one step farther, and I'll——"

But what he was going to do was suddenly drowned. The cook, seizing a bowl of flapjack batter, brought it down full force on Sanderson's head. The batter poured over his face and down his evening clothes. He sputtered, swung right and left, cursed, and the next moment found himself sitting on the curb outside.

The tension broke. O'Toole and the cook doubled over the counter with laughter. Henry contemplated them with a stupid grin. The next moment, Penbury stepped back into the wagon.

"I think you had better go, too," he said, taking Henry's arm. "We've had enough of you for to-night."

And Henry went.

THREE weeks later, when Penbury asked for an extension and increase of his loan—which would have made it possible for him to buy up the New York wagons—the First National promptly refused his request. Moreover, it notified him that, since his was a call-loan, it would be obliged to ask for payment within three days.

At first the letter angered him. Then he started to laugh.

"Evidently Charlie Sanderson still has the taste of that flapjack batter in his mouth," he remarked, passing the letter over to O'Toole.

"Ividently."

"Only, what I don't see is what our little run-in with him has to do with a purely business proposition." Penbury studied the letter again. "Their loan was perfectly safe. The only explanation I can see for this is that they want to call in this loan in order to raise the rate of interest. Call-money is up two points from what it was when this loan was made."

"That may be," O'Toole answered, wagging his head; "but I don't like the smell of this. Sanderson's on th' dirictors of the First. His father's th' prisident. Him an' father gits their heads together. Good-night to James Fitzgerald Penbury!"

"Good-night, nothing!" Penbury exclaimed. "We'll meet this. We'll fool 'em!" He turned to Miss Garrity. "Tell the bookkeeper to come in here."

When the bookkeeper appeared, Penbury asked how much cash they could raise in the next three days. He reported that their balance was a little over five thousand.

"All right. Go slow on payments for the next three days." The bookkeeper left the office. "That's five thousand, anyway, and I've another five at my personal account. Now we'll see what our friends can do."

For some time he sat writing names on a pad, crossed off some, added others, changed the list, and finally boiled it down to four. They were the names of four business men in Corchester whom he had known since he was a small boy. They all belonged to his set, and he knew that during the past few months they had all attended parties in his wagons. They were the kind of people in whom Sylvia had hoped to create good will.

While Miss Garrity was getting the telephone-number of the first, Penbury turned again to O'Toole, who sat by his desk, anxiously waiting.

"The queer part about this little affair, Michael, is that it comes at a very inconvenient time. I hope you've been burning the candle I asked you for that night we sat in the Last Card."

"I ain't forgot it."

"That's good! I need it." Penbury smiled grimly. "This happens to-day. To-morrow night I have a little talk with Mr. Hunter. You'd better burn several more."

"Your number, Mr. Penbury," the girl broke in.

O'Toole went over to the window and gazed down into the street while Penbury was explaining to his first patron the necessity for his raising a little money. He was frankly afraid, and he showed it, but there was no excitement or fear in Penbury's tone. In a quiet, even voice he explained frankly that there was an immediate necessity for a loan and that, as would be appreciated, he was quite able to cover it with notes and ample assets. Before he hung up, he had jotted down five thousand more on his pad. A second call brought him another five thousand. So did the third. He still had a fourth name. It was his father's.

"We've twenty-five thousand so far," he said calmly. O'Toole turned round. His face was beaming. "There's five more to go. I can ask my father for it. Only, I hate like blazes to do it." Penbury thought for a moment, drew a deep breath, then slowly crossed his father's name off the list.

O'Toole watched his face. He thought he saw a flicker of doubt shadow it. Penbury was looking straight ahead. O'Toole felt helpless. Then a brilliant idea dawned upon him.

"What about Misther Hunter?"

"Never, Michael; never!"

O'Toole caught his breath.

"That would be embarrassin'," he acknowledged. "All the same, I'm wonderin' how the First National can call this here loan on yeh whin they must know how close yeh are to th' Hunters. Why, if I was th' dirictor of a bank, th' very fact that you was interested in Mr. Hunter's daughter would be enough fer me."

"I hadn't thought of that," Penbury answered, resting his elbows on the desk. "It's the sort of thing I wouldn't want to think. I wouldn't want to presume that much. But it would be a perfectly natural conclusion." He flung back his head. "Still, that doesn't get us our five thousand."

O'Toole began pacing the room nervously.

He bit off the end of a cigar and chewed it deliberately as he walked back and forth, his hands clasped behind him. Finally he turned and wriggled the cigar at Penbury.

"I've got it! Why don't you ask th' boys fer it?"

"I don't quite understand you."

"Here yeh are, fer almost two years sharin' profits with nine men—eight in the wagons and me here. Call thim in. Tell thim what yeh want. There's not one of thim that won't be glad to go down into his jeans. And yeh can start right now and put me down fer one thousand dollars. Michael O'Toole, one thousand dollars."

"I hate to do that, Mike; you've got a big family. The other boys have families, all growing up. Living is high and——"

"Pardon me, Misther Penbury." The old Irishman raised an interrupting hand. He turned to the secretary and gestured. "Miss Garrity, will yeh kindly see that all the old day min assimble in this office to-night."

"All of them work late to-night," she suggested.

"All right. To-morrow night, thin. Tell them to come here direct from the wagons at sivin o'clock." He turned to Penbury. "If yeh please, Misther Penbury, bein' yer manager, I assume this responsibility."

"That's awfully good of you, Michael; only, I don't feel right about this at all. You are very generous and——"

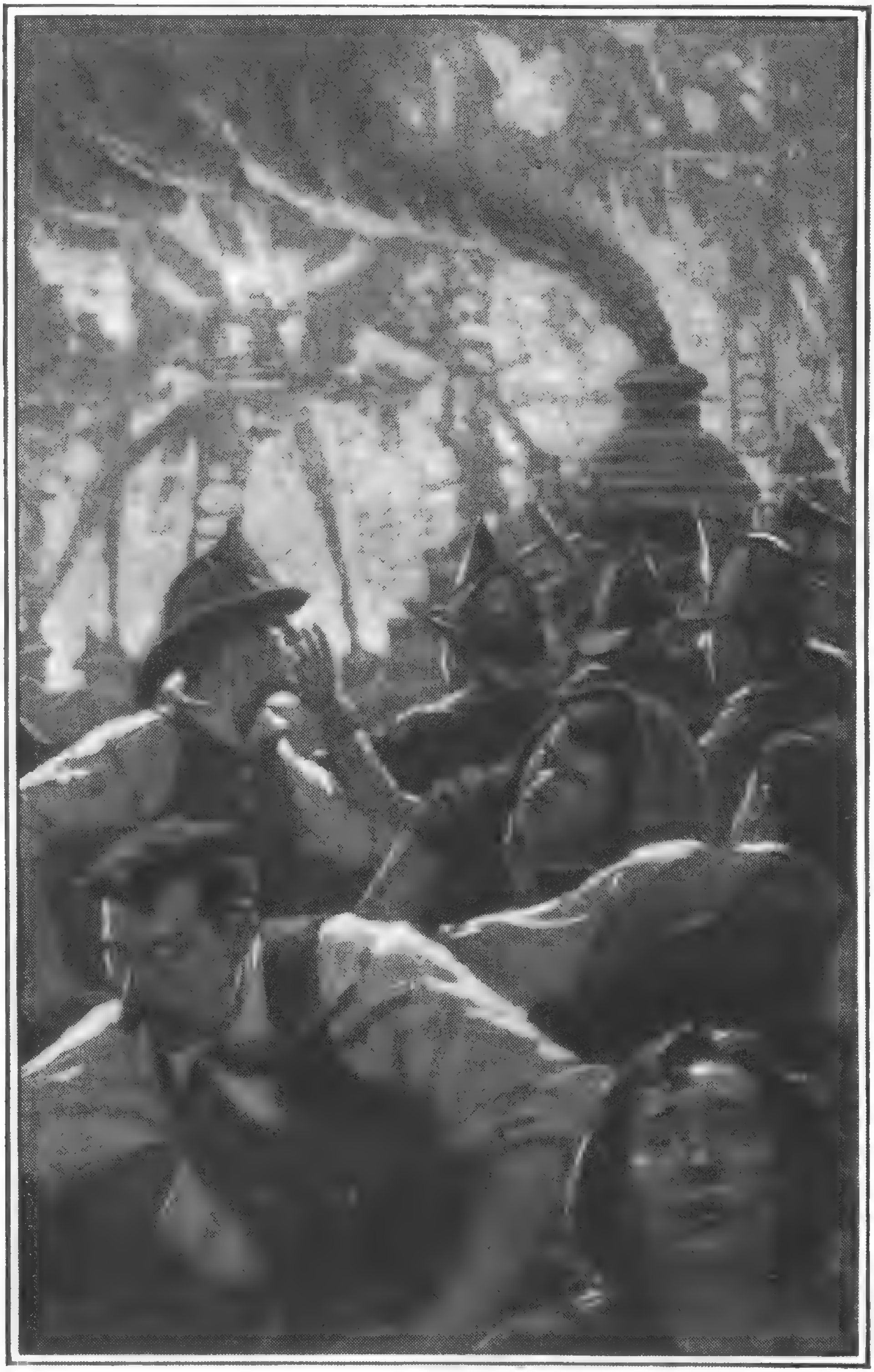
"Don't thank me, me boy; don't thank me. Whin we git through with yeh to-morrow night, you can go up there to th' Hunter mansion and tell papa what yeh want without being afraid of th' outcome." He turned again to the stenographer. "And, Miss Garrity, see that there's a frish box of cigars by to-morrow night. We've run out of 'em. Charge it to entertainment."

THE eight who sat round the table in Penbury's office that night were quite different from the original eight who had first sat around it. They all looked prosperous, happy and contented. There was no hesitation in their acceptance of his cigars. They talked easily and freely. They argued and suggested; they bantered talk back and forth. McSorley, who by day ruled over King George's tipple, mocked Lanahan's effort to beat his receipts with the collection in the Cock and Hen. Severally and collectively they chevied O'Toole about the red vest which, in a moment of sartorial amnesia, he had put on with his cutaway.

Finally, O'Toole, after working several moments at his desk in the corner, stood up.

"If yeh don't mind, Misther Penbury, I'd like to be th' chairman of this here meetin'."

"Not at all, Michael." Penbury took a chair behind O'Toole, who sat at the desk.



One block more, and the pavements grew thicker. People with bundles were hurrying away from the fire. Above the hiss of the sleet came gruff shouts, He waited until the men were still, then began:

"Boys, y're called here fer somethin' serious. Six months ago, Misther Penbury borrowed—with our consent and full knowledge—thirty thousand dollars from th' First National. Most of that he spint startin' th' wagons in Atlanta. Th' Atlanta wagons is about to break even if all goes well. With this encouragemint, he was plannin' to take New York by storm and buy up a system of wagons there. He intinded askin' fer an extinsion of his loan and maybe add to it. Just in his moment of triumph the First National calls th' loan. It catches him a little short. We've got five thousand in the bank. He's got five thousand in his own account. He's raised fifteen thousand dollars outside. That leaves us five to go." O'Toole halted for a moment and contemplated the end of his unlit cigar. Then he deliberately lighted it, took three puffs and held it between his fingers.

"Fer over two years now, Misther Penbury has been sharin' profits with us. He's played decent. To-night we can help him. I'm loanin' him one thousand dollars. That makes only four thousand to go. I'm askin' you, what can yeh do?" He turned to a slip of paper on which was written the names of the original eight men. "McSorley, what about it?"

McSorley contemplated the ceiling.

"I guess I can make it two hundred and fifty," he said.

"McSorley, two hundred and fifty," O'Toole repeated, as he put down the figure opposite McSorley's name. "Lanahan?"

"Put me down fer two hundred and sivinty-five," Lanahan replied, without a moment's hesitation.

"I guess yeh can make mine two sivinty-five, too, Mike," McSorley broke in.

O'Toole changed the figures.

"O'Brien?"

"Three hundred." O'Brien rolled out the words.

"Make mine four hundred!" Lanahan shouted.

"I'll raise mine to three fifty," McSorley called.

"Four hundred!" O'Brien said. "I'll——"

"Stop yer fightin', boys!" O'Toole banged his hand down on the desk. "Yeh got to stop raising yer ante. There's eight of yeh. Eight into four goes five times. If yeh want to do the right thing, yeh'll all give five hundred. What do yeh say?"

"Make it five, Mike; make it five," McSorley replied. The other seven concurred.

O'Toole stood up and turned round to Penbury.

"Misther Penbury, I have th' honor," he said, bowing. "And since yeh have an important date to-night, I don't see that it will be nicissary fer us to keep you here. Boys, have another cigar."

THE late mail arrived just as Sylvia and her father were finishing dinner.

"All for you," said Sylvia, running her hands over the letters. "It's a most official-looking mail."

"If it's official, then the passports have come. Ah, yes!" He waved an envelope across the table. "And the Myrtle Bank says that our reservations will be made." He dropped the letters and rubbed his hands merrily. "I've just written to La Garda to expect us in Manderville any day after New Year's."

"Must we go?" she asked faintly, glancing shyly across at him.

"Go?" He wrinkled his forehead into a grimace of fine scorn. "Don't you want to go to Jamaica?" She shook her head. "Oh, you silly girl! But I know why you don't want to go. You're afraid Jim Penbury will run off with another girl."

"Oh, no!" Her tone was quite cool. She moved from the table without speaking further. They went into the big hall and the maid brought their coffee.

She knew that Jim was coming, and she knew why. And yet she rather resented her father's reference to him. Of course Jimmy wouldn't run off with another girl.

Mr. Hunter took his coffee and stood before the fire, stirring it slolwy and gazing into the blaze.

"Queer boy! Queer boy!" he murmured absently, as if to himself. "Sometimes he's as clear as day to me. Other times I can't make him out at all." He took a swallow of coffee and set down the cup. "Take that loan, for example."

Sylvia crowded down into the corner of the couch and gathered the tulle scarf about her shoulders.

"Here he goes to the First National, raises thirty thousand dollars and never so much as consults me." Hunter shrugged. "Of course he wasn't obliged to, but, under the circumstances, I'd expect him to talk it over with me. Wouldn't you think he'd do that?"

"I think he should have," she replied deliberately.

"Certainly. I—ah——"

"On the other hand," she continued, "there may have been some extenuating business circumstance that prevented him, made it inadvisable for him to speak."

"Nonsense, my dear girl! There's never any extenuating business circumstance that prevents a man from mentioning a fact that every one already knows or can easily find out."

She did not reply for a time.

"Is there?" he pressed.

"You must remember, daddy," she said, looking up at him with wide eyes, "Jim Penbury is not like the run of ordinary business men. He uses none of the intrigue, none of the cold calculation that most men use to climb up to success. He's shy—he really is. He's a poet. He's a poet who has strayed into business—and is making good. And he will make good. He'll make a wonderful success, if he only keeps on being a poet."

"Poet? Stuff and nonsense!" Hunter began pacing the hearth.

"No; it isn't stuff and nonsense," Sylvia pursued, wriggling herself up straight in her corner. "Jimmy took a whim and made a success with it. He had a dream, and he dared to realize it. He has an ideal behind his rollling restaurants, and he maintains that ideal at all costs. Do you realize what he dreams? He dreams of putting his lunch-wagons in every city of size in America, to make the suburbs of America palpitate with peregrinating centers of gastronomic delights—that's his own delightful phrase."

Mr. Hunter stopped, threw back his head and broke into a loud laugh.

"That's all right, dad. James Penbury's taking good, honest, wholesome food, which every one needs, serves it in interesting and pleasant places—and he is going to give the entire country the benefit of it."

She fell back in her corner. The reply had caused her effort, but she could see that it set him thinking. Whatever he replied, she had registered with him the vastness of Jimmy's dream.

"So you've been lying under the poet's rose-bush, too," he said, with a wag of his head. "Well, we'll see——"

"But don't you think it a magnificent ambition?"

"It is a magnificent dream. I'll concede you that. But it's a fool's dream."

"If, by calling him a fool, you think to make any change in him," she countered angrily, "it's pretty late in the day to start that. He was laughed at for years. He's not such a fool when half the business men of Corchester prefer his wagons for luncheon to the Congress grill. He's not such a fool when society flocks to the wagons at night. You went, didn't you?"

"But he'll be a fool if he gets caught short with his loan," he answered, ignoring her appeal. "All the divinity of poets in the world won't save him then. Business is business, and a loan's a loan." Hunter stopped, glanced down at her and then added: "The First National has called his loan. If he can't meet it, then he's done for."

Sylvia went white.

"Oh, daddy, they didn't!" she cried, seizing hold of his arm.

"Yes; I heard it just last night."

SHE fell back in her corner, biting her lip. Jim hadn't told her about that. Perhaps he was afraid of worrying her.

"Is it really so?" she demanded. He nodded. "But why should they?"

"My dear, there are many things in business that you know nothing of, and there are sides to this matter that I can't tell you."

She leaned forward.

"What sort of things?"

"No, no; don't press me! I sha'n't tell." He turned his back on her and stood facing the fire.

"But, daddy, you must tell. It is only right; it is only fair——"

"There's no use begging, my dear girl. I sha'n't tell you." He turned round. "Let's stop this discussion right here. In about two weeks you and I are going to Jamaica. You will have time to think this whole matter over. Then, when you have——"

"I don't want to discuss Jamaica," she insisted angrily. "Jim is coming here to-night to see you. You have hinted at unmentionable things regarding his loan. I want to know what these things are."

"No, Sylvia," he replied, with a decisive gesture; "not another word."

"Then I shall stay here while you are talking with him."

Her father glared at her. Then his anger died away.

"No; I think you had better not."

The door-bell rang. A maid crossed the hall.

"There's Jim now," he said. "You run up-stairs, my dear."

She hesitated for a moment; then she dragged herself slowly from her corner. As she stood up, he caught her in his arms. She tried to pull away from him, but he had her fast.

"But you will be kind to him, won't you, dad?"

"We'll see," he answered tenderly.

HUNTER stood before the fire, his hands clasped behind him, as Penbury came in. Jim had come straight from the office and hadn't stopped to dress. He was quite buoyant, as if there wasn't a care on his mind.

"Cigar?" Hunter offered.

"If you don't mind—" Penbury pulled a cigarette from his pocket and sat on the arm of the couch.

The great hall was still. Darkness held its farther corners and the reaches of the stairs, save a narrow slit on the gallery below Sylvia's door.

"I understand the First National has you in a tight corner, Jim," Mr. Hunter finally remarked.

"They did for about five minutes," he replied casually. "They gave me notice on my loan, called it in for Saturday, but I've covered myself. My men, with whom I have been sharing profits, subscribed the last five thousand to-night just before I left the office."

"That's good!" Hunter contemplated the ash on his cigar. He had not expected such a quick recovery. A moment passed. Penbury did not speak. Hunter screwed up his mouth as though about to say something and then said nothing. Finally he broke the awkward pause. "Two things you did this year, Jim, that rather disappointed me—you took this loan and spent it expanding to Atlanta, and you didn't tell me about it or ask my advice. I expected you would." He nodded his head pointedly. "Why didn't you consult me?"

"For the simple reason that I wanted to do these things unaided." Penbury got up and flung his cigarette into the fire. He was apparently ready for just such a question. "I should—I know I should have asked your advice, sir. On the other hand, I realized that I had a queer, unbusinesslike reputation to live down and no amount of advice would help me do it."

A faint smile crossed Hunter's face—a skeptical smile.

"A couple of years ago most people in Corchester took me for a bookish sort of fool," Penbury continued, resuming his seat on the corner of the couch. "When I came into Grandfather Fitzgerald's money, the family wanted to reform me—wanted me to study law. I refused. I had a whim I wanted to follow. I undertook the rolling restaurants. The family was very angry. But the rolling restaurants made money. Lately, business men have come to them at noon and society at night. I became little less of a fool. When I cut down prices so that the workmen of this town could beat the food profiteers, my business only increased the more. Still, I was slightly the fool.

"Then I evolved the idea of putting rolling restaurants in every city of size in America. I hit on Atlanta as the first place to expand. These wagons are doing as well as can be expected. My next plan is to break into New York.

"I have done these things without assistance—except for the loyalty of my men, with whom I share profits—without advice, save from the same men. I can even look you in the eye, Mr. Hunter—I say this with all respect—and know that I am not beholden even to you."

Mr. Hunter flicked an ash off the lapel of his dinner jacket and swallowed.

"Well, that's true. You can. You're not even beholden to me for advice."

"The loan that the First National gave me was a business proposition pure and simple. They had a full report of my financial condition. They knew what they were doing. There was every reason to suppose that the loan would be extended. It was safe, and they knew it." Jim gazed down at the floor and then up into Hunter's face. "But I can't fathom why they should suddenly change their opinion except on personal grounds, and the only personal grounds I know of are not the sort of things that I should think would influence a board of directors."

"You mean your strained relationship with Charlie Sanderson?" Penbury nodded. "No; that isn't the reason." Mr. Hunter mouthed his cigar and looked into the fire. Suddenly he stuffed his hands into his pockets and drew himself up as if about to launch an attack. "And the other thing you wanted to speak about," he said sharply, "was Sylvia."

"Yes, sir. I want to marry her." Penbury's tone was equally quick. "As soon as this emergency is over, I shall be in a position to marry her. I want to be able to announce our engagement next week."

Mr. Hunter took two steps forward and dropped his cigar carefully into the fire. He was thinking; his movements were slow. Finally he sat down again on the couch and scratched his beard reflectively.

"Well, Jim, you've been direct with me. I'm going to be direct with you. So long as you have the rolling restaurants, you cannot marry Sylvia." Penbury started back. "Hear me out. I have reasons." Hunter raised a hand. "Sylvia is a very remarkable girl, a most unusual girl—brainy, clever, beautiful, discerning, talented. She grows more like her blessed mother every day. But that isn't the point. The simple fact is this—my daughter cannot marry a man who owns lunch-wagons."

"But, my dear Mr. Hunter, we're living in the twentieth century—in a free country!"

"True; but there are also some rules of caste that apply to-day. Don't fool yourself on that. My family, my position, my—ah, well-to-do state in life, this house—ah, no, Jim; those things don't fit into the same picture with lunch-wagons."

"But didn't it ever occur to you that there are perfectly good reasons for my having those wagons?" Penbury was quite cool.

"Oh, I know all about this idealistic twaddle—good food for the working classes. Pretty, but it won't go down." Hunter dismissed the thought with a gesture. "Had you been sensible and reasonable, you would have done what your family wanted almost three years ago—study law. Instead, you had this damned-fool notion, this whim—and now look where you are!"

"At least, I am not a third-rate lawyer," Penbury darted at him, "dependent on his family, a seeker of cushy jobs and climbing up under influence."

"No; you're an owner of lunch-wagons. And because you are, you cannot marry Sylvia. That's my first reason."

"You mean to imply, sir," Penbury replied calmly, "that had I been a third-rate lawyer I would have been acceptable as a son-in-law, but since I am a first-class owner of first-class lunch-wagons, I am not?"

"I haven't said that."

"Well, sir, I am not going to give up the wagons." Penbury looked him square in the eye. "Neither am I going to give up Sylvia."

HUNTER drew a long breath and gazed at him. He was hurt, angry and, for the moment, baffled. He hadn't expected Jim to put up that sort of fight. But he still had a trump-card to play.

"There's another matter that concerns both these things," he began, after a moment, "and I don't quite know how to put it. Sit down here alongside of me, my boy. My voice often carries."

Penbury took the place beside him on the couch. Hunter glanced up at the gallery, where the yellow slit of light beneath Sylvia's door cut the darkness.

"I've never set myself up as a plaster saint, Jim," he began softly. "When I was a youngster, I played round with the worst of them. But the moment I met Sylvia's mother, I stopped that sort of thing. From that day to this, no man has ever been able to breathe a word of scandal about me. I think that, when a young fellow starts paying attentions to a girl, it is only decent of him to do the same."

"Why certainly, sir." Penbury couldn't fathom what he was trying to get at.

"You really mean that?" Hunter looked over his shoulder at him.

"I do."

"Well, it is difficult to reconcile your assurance with some things told me last evening."

"What things?"

"This girl down at the Congress."

"Girl? Congress?" Penbury knitted his brow. What on earth could Hunter be driving at? "I really don't understand, sir."

"The simple fact is this, Jim: The First National refused to extend your loan because it had been informed, from an authentic source, that you got tangled up with a girl while in New York, and she is now at the Congress. They didn't consider it safe to loan money to a man who would do that sort of thing in his own home town. This girl landed in Corchester a few days ago. Her name is Madeleine Smith," Hunter added slowly. "Perhaps that will recall something to you."

"Smith? Madeleine Smith?" Penbury closed his eyes. The name was familiar. "Oh, oh, yes!" he sputtered. "Now I do remember her. She was a girl I met in New York—a chorus-girl. I met her in a lunch-wagon."

"She seems to know all about you, Jim."

"Does she? Well, I—I'm very sure I didn't tell her, though, because most of our conversation was about poetry. I recall it perfectly now. I read her some Robert Burns from a copy I had with me."

"Is this the book?" Hunter asked, producing the thin, limp-leather volume from his pocket and handing it to Penbury.

"Yes." Penbury opened it to the flyleaf. "Yes, sir; that's the one."

"And you wrote this in and gave it to her: 'To Madeleine Smith. In recollection of a pleasant evening'?"

"I did, sir."

"And did you write her this love-letter?" Hunter flipped it out at him.

"I did not." Penbury went red with rage. "I wrote that letter to Sylvia and left it in the book by mistake."

"You mean to acknowledge all this and in the same breath ask my permission to marry Sylvia?"

"I do." Penbury had the mastery of his temper now. His face was grim. He stood before Hunter his hands half clenched into a fist. "I can assure you that I did no wrong, sir. I gave the girl this book because she seemed to enjoy the poetry. I never dreamed that she would come to Corchester."

"And still you presume to say, in the face of all this nasty scandal, that you love my daughter?" Hunter wagged his head.

"I do indeed!" Penbury stepped closer to him. "I also presume to say that in a short time you will know the truth of this whole affair. If it's blackmail, I'll fight it. If it's malicious defamation of character, I'll show the defamer up." Hunter drew back. "I'd like you to answer just one question, Mr. Hunter," Penbury said. "Was the person who brought you this book Charles Sanderson?"

"It was."

"I suspected as much." Penbury slid the book into his pocket. "I'll be calling you up within an hour," he said, as he turned toward the door.

OUTSIDE, Penbury stopped to turn up his overcoat collar. The storm that had threatened all afternoon and had begun just as he arrived was now coming down furiously. Sleet streaked the air—sleet and snow. The bitter wind blowing across the valley cut him in the face. He turned to look back at the house. Sylvia's curtain went up, and for a moment she was silhouetted against the light. He waved back to her and went on.

Things had tumbled about his head the way the storm was tumbling—everything at once, madly, as if determined to see his downfall. It was a crisis, and he knew it; but he faced the facts with confidence. Sanderson hadn't reckoned on the loyalty of his men. Had Hunter reckoned on the loyalty of Sylvia to him? That new-born loyalty that springs up between lovers in distress, confident in its ability to overcome all obstacles? Sylvia's appearance at the window had heartened him. He slipped along to the top of the hill. It was hard going—and he still had hard work ahead. Would he find that girl at the Congress? Surely she wouldn't be out on a night like this.

At the top of the hill he stopped to catch his breath—raised his head and looked round at the fury of the storm. On the horizon toward town an unusual glow caught his eye. It pulsated ominously. Huge clouds of smoke were pouring out across the sky. The storm was too thick for him to see much. It seemed to come from the other side of town, down in the mill district.

He called good-night as he passed the lodge and headed down the street toward the trolley.

He was not quite determined on his line of action. It would all depend on how she acted. He was angered through and through, and yet he was also curious to find what her motive was in coming to Corchester. Why hadn't she written him? Or had Sanderson, in some underhand way, found out his knowing her and brought her to Corchester to use against him? But why should she be party to such a game? The whole affair had an evil, sinister aspect that he could not fathom.

AS HE reached the Congress corner, a woman was coming down the steps of the side entrance. He started up the steps and had almost passed her when she turned. The light from the door behind her revealed her face. It was almost hidden by the high collar of her fur coat and the veil that she wore. Evidently she was just going out to see the fire. As Penbury stopped, she gave a little gasp and her hand reached out to seize the railing.

"You're just the person I'm looking for!" he exclaimed.

She drew back.

"You! You! I thought you weren't here. I thought I'd never get to see you. When did you return?"

"Return? I've never been away." His tone was slightly cynical. She was putting up a bold front. "And I guess you know I haven't. But that's not what I'm here for. I have just learned that you were in Corchester. Why are you here? Who—what—brought you here?"

"I came myself. I——"

"You did? I don't believe it."

"Oh, how can you?" She reached out for his arm, but he drew it away quickly. "If you only knew why I did come here, you wouldn't say that. I came to—" A fire-engine rolled by, its bell clattering. Her words were lost in the noise.

"See here," Penbury said sharply; "I haven't any time to waste. I want to know why you came here and why you are trying to make trouble for me."

"I haven't made any trouble." She seemed amazed at the idea. She shrugged, opened her coat, gestured weakly and looked up at him with a blank countenance.

"Well then, why did you come?" he insisted.

"Do I have to explain that?"

"You most certainly do!"

She looked up into his face, then bent her head.

"I wanted to see you," she murmured.

"That's a likely story."

"But it's true just the same. I guess it was the letter in that book. It made me want you." She raised her head. "No one ever wrote me such a letter."

An ambulance clattered down the street. Penbury turned. The noise of its bell ricochetted round the walls of the open vestibule where they stood.

"So you came here to see me," he repeated. "What, in God's name, did you expect I would do?"

"I don't know." She shrugged wearily. "I wanted to see you. That was all. Talk with you. I thought maybe—" She did not finish.

Two men stepped in the shelter of the entrance to knock the sleet from their hats.

"They've just turned in the fourth alarm," one remarked. "Looks as if the whole East End is going up." They passed on.

Penbury shifted uneasily. He was in no mood for sentiment and he was anxious to get to the fire. The Brimming Bowl and Goat in Boots were in the East End. Had the fire reached them?

"If you were so anxious to see me, why didn't you telephone me when you arrived? My name's in the telephone-book."

"That's just it. You see"— she gestured ineffectually—"I didn't know. I came to the hotel expecting to stay maybe one night. But a funny thing happened. I was registering at the desk. I asked the clerk where I could get in touch with you. A gentleman who was standing by the desk said that he knew you and that you were out of town."

"That wasn't true."

"I didn't know it wasn't," she pleaded. "I believed him. When he said that, my heart went right down into my shoes. I asked him when you were coming home, and he said in a few days. Then he whispered something to the clerk and I went up to my room."

"Who was the gentleman?" Penbury bent his head forward for the reply.

"I'm coming to that," she put him off, laying a hand on his arm. He did not draw away. Something about the girl's evident chagrin appealed to him. "I no more got in my room than he telephoned up. I was all excited. He said he noticed I was a stranger in town and maybe he could do something for me. Well, that made me feel better. I said, certainly—it was nice of him to be so thoughtful. Then he said maybe I'd like to see your lunch-wagons." She stopped and shook her head. "I didn't know you ran lunch-wagons."

"Yes, I do. But what happened then?"

"Well, he said he had his car down-stairs, and wouldn't I like to ride? So I came down and he took me out. We had a long ride through the country and stopped at that lunch-wagon, The Last——"

"The Last Card," Penbury prompted. "Did he say why he took you there instead of any of the other wagons?"

"Well, he told me that he wanted to see how they treated him. He said something about some one trying to put him out of there."

"So the gentleman was Mr. Charles Sanderson."

"How did you know?" she exclaimed.

"I was the one who threw him out of the Last Card," Penbury replied grimly. "And I suppose he's been paying your bills here?" he added.

She looked down at her feet.

"He's been awfully kind. He offered to, and——"

"As a result of that, do you know what they are saying round town about me?" he broke in on her angrily. "They say that I am keeping you here, here at this hotel—boldly, brazenly keeping you here in my own home town, where everybody knows me and my family, where everybody understands that I'm engaged to a girl."

"My God!" he heard her murmur.

"But that isn't all. Do you remember this book?" He drew it out of his pocket.

She lurched forward at the sight of it.

"Where'd you find it? I've hunted all over the place for that book."

"You missed it, then? Or did you give it to Sanderson?"

"I didn't give it to him." Her eyes flashed. "It was taken from my room."

"Was Sanderson ever in your room?" She hesitated for a moment and then nodded. "Did you ever show him this?"

"Yes; I told him you gave it to me."

"Now, I'll tell you what he's used that book for. Sanderson's father is president of the bank from which I have taken a loan. He is also one of the directors. On the strength of that book as evidence that I am keeping you here, he had the bank call my loan. The bank did not consider it safe to loan money to a man who dared to keep a woman the way I was said to be keeping you. Sanderson has tried to cripple me. He's tried to hurt my business from the moment I started it. And he's also tried to use this book to turn my girl away from me."

"I'll go right up there and tell her that."

"You won't go up there," Penbury growled. "Neither Miss Hunter nor her father needs any proof from you. She'll take my word. What you've got to do is to straighten this matter out with the man who started it—Sanderson."

"The dir-ty skunk!" she murmured. Then suddenly her eyes flashed. "Wait till I get that dirty——"

"That's precisely what you've got to do," he insisted. "My reputation is as clean as a whistle in this town. But it's up to you to clear yourself by making him retract his statements about me."

"Watch me!" she said, curling up her fist.

"Don't think I'm blaming you." Jim took her by the arm. "I'm not. You're not the person who has done this. You're innocent. Remember that I don't hold it against you—not for a minute. Only, if you're a friend of mine, you'll straighten this out."

HE STARTED to turn away. As he looked out toward the street, a glowing ember, blown by the wind, tumbled down to the pavement. For a moment he had almost forgotten the fire. He shot out his hand.

"I know you're a friend of mine. I know you are."

"Thanks—dearie." She nodded slowly.

He started to go. When he reached the foot of the stairs, she held out her hands as if to call him.

"I—I—" Penbury looked back. "I want you to do something for me," she begged, beckoning to him. "Would you give—give me that book back?" He hesitated. "I want it for that poem about a red, red rose," she murmured.

For the fraction of a second he hesitated. Tears were in her eyes. Slowly he pulled out the book and gave it to her.

ACRID smoke blown in the sleety breeze from the East End tingled his nostrils as he rounded the corner of the Congress into Main Street. Already it had been a night of quick transitions, and here was another situation into which he found himself plunged.

Few people were in sight, and these few were headed in the same direction—toward Grierson Street, at the foot of which stretched the numerous factories and warehouses of the Kemp Saw Works.

At the top of the street he halted. The sight gripped him. Buildings on either side were silhouetted into black masses leading down to the bottom of the hill. At the foot, the furnace—great clouds of smoke rose majestically above the scene, gray columns reaching up the bronze-and-black ceiling of the sky.

It was vast, terrible, fascinating. He was dazed by the hugeness of it, its inexorable power, its blinding lights, its rapacious consumption. Before it he felt helpless, and yet it lured him as few things in his life before had ever lured.

He started down the street. The pavements began to be peopled. The side streets, too, were alive. Occasional embers fell in the crowds, like glowing sticks from spent rockets. Yet the people seemed to move about aimlessly, as if satiated with the terror of the fire and yet unable to leave it. They were mostly women—women with shawls over their heads, strident-voiced and gesticulating, in the manner of foreigners.

A block further, and he came across an object that jerked him back to reality—an old horse-drawn ambulance of the Corchester General Hospital. The newer ones were motors. They must have called out all the ambulances, he figured. As he stood looking at it, a coal-wagon of the Fire Department rumbled down the icy street on its round to feed the engines an extra supply. They didn't use that coal-wagon unless the fire was going to last a long time.

One block more, and the pavements grew thicker. People with bundles were hurrying away from the fire. One man was pushing a wheelbarrow heaped with household goods, his abundant family streaming in his wake. A woman stumbled past with a baby in one arm and a clock under the other. She didn't seem to mind the driving sleet.

On each side, the houses were animated with lights. Wagons stood against the curbs loading up with household things. Above the hiss of the sleet came gruff shouts of the movers and screeched orders from women calling from the windows.

A policeman on the corner valiantly kept to his peg-post, urging the stream of wagons on their way. He recognized Penbury.

"Yes, sir; both of yours is gone. It just licked 'em up." "Them" was the Brimming Bowl and Goat in Boots, stationed at the two big entrances to the works.

Penbury whistled and went on. Above the immediate noise began to rise the heavy pulsation of the fire-engines. It made the air tremble. Sparks and embers were thicker now. The smoke was heavier and began to hurt his eyes.

Two blocks back from the lines he spoke to a fireman stoking his fire from the fresh pile of coal the supply-wagon had just left. Sweat streamed down the man's face as he rose up from the fire-box.

"Under control? Hell! Not a chance." He bent to his task again.

"Has it crossed the street?"

"Why, man, it's burned half the block across."

The police were driving the people back. Beyond this wavering line, the gigantic furnace pulsated and rocked, spewing up clouds of smoke and sparks. Against it the engines and hose-carts stood out in bold, black relief. Firemen ran across the mouth of the furnace gesticulating like madmen.

He had become accustomed to its fascination now. Its intense, poignant reality began to etch its way into his bewildered brain. As he stood on the top of some steps, a great urge to do something seized him. Here was a terrible calamity, a catastrophe—and he was watching it as if it were a pantomime given for his benefit. But what could he do? The challenge no more came to him than he leaped down the steps and hurried toward the nearest corner. There was a drug store there. The proprietor was hastily emptying the cash-drawer as Penbury entered.

"Can't wait on you!" he yelled. "Been ordered out. They're going to dynamite."

Penbury glanced round the store. Evidently some one had been injured and brought in here. Rolls of bandages spilled over the counter, and there was a spattering of blood on the floor.

"But I must use your 'phone!" Jim shouted back.

"Can't stop for that." The druggist tried to push him out.

Penbury insisted, forced his way past and walked directly into the booth.

He caught O'Toole just as he was leaving his house for the fire.

"Get teams or trucks, Mike," he ordered. "Move six of the nearest wagons to streets leading to the fire. Any streets. Put three of 'em on Main Street in front of St. Mark's. I'll get extra supplies from the warehouse." He hung up.

AT THAT moment, the druggist, economical soul, switched off the lights.

"Come on, mister! I can't wait. It's coming nearer."

Penbury calmly lifted the receiver again. The rector of St. Mark's Church had been watching the fire from his study windows and sounded a bit annoyed at being called away from his point of vantage. St. Mark's was the big Episcopal church of Corchester, the aristocratic parish, and the rector was not a man to take orders. But he took them this time. In words of which there was no mistaking the seriousness, Penbury asked that the church be opened instantly for the housing of the women and children made homeless. The rector promised immediate action.

From his darkened telephone-booth Penbury suddenly became aware of how light the store had become. Gusts of smoke and a rain of sparks blew against the show-window. The smoke began rolling in the opened door, its acrid tang penetrating to the corner where he stood wriggling the hook to call central's attention again. An engine drew up in front of the store and began panting furiously. It almost drowned his voice as he asked for his number.

Mr. Hunter had been waiting that call. Jim had promised that he would telephone within an hour.

"Well, Jim, did you settle that matter?" he asked.

"Settle it? Oh, yes! And forgotten it, too. I've got to settle several hundred people to-night and I want you to help me. Who's the head of the Red Cross here? Sanderson, senior? Can you have him send blankets immediately to St. Mark's Church? Scores of people are being made homeless by this fire. The Red Cross can cover them. St. Mark's will give them shelter. I'll feed them. . . . Right away? What did you say?" He wriggled the hook. Something clicked and broke. No answer.

Outside the shouting increased. The light had grown brighter. There was a sudden rumble, followed by the crash of walls and the thunder of glass and stone and tin hurled together. The store swayed. He ran to the door. Half-way down the block on the other side they had dynamited a tenement. Jim glanced back. He was inside the fire-lines. The engine blew off a blast of steam. He crouched before it and ran for safety. At the crossing a hose suddenly burst, shooting out a geyser. Firemen dodged right and left.

"Better get back, Jim," a police captain gruffed at him. "Pretty dangerous here."

He turned round and bellowed into the captain's ear:

"Tell these people to go up to St. Mark's Church! It's opened—Red Cross sending blankets. I'm moving my wagons to feed them—free of charge." He forced his way through the confusion and headed back toward Main Street.

Slowly, persistently, the shifting of the rolling restaurants was accomplished until there was a wagon on every principal street leading to the fire, three of them right on the brink of the furnace to serve the needs of the firemen. Three others were lined up on Main Street in front of St. Mark's. Inside, the night shifts worked valiantly, aided by the day men, who volunteered. One counter filled and fed, another took its place. Free of charge to all—tidal waves of coffee and shoals of fried-egg sandwiches and flapjacks as innumerable as the pages of an encyclopedia.

There were always fresh boxes of supplies on hand. Jim saw to this himself. The Penbury truck, with Jim at the wheel, rolled and bounced up and down the icy streets, through perilous side alleys, over hose and under sagging wires, going from one wagon to the other with its service of supply.

Midnight passed and the small hours. He was still on the job. Four o'clock struck as he finally pulled the truck up in front of St. Mark's. He was tuckered out. He could sleep at the wheel. If he only could crawl into some corner and lie down! But it was bitterly cold.

From his seat he gazed on the strange sight—the Knickerbocker Bar, the Red Lion, and Hole in th' Wall ranged end on end by the curb. People were inside. The street-lights above them were haloed about with sleet and mist. Above all this—a strangely fitting symbol—burned the big electric cross over the front entrance of the church, its arms reaching out as if to gather to its heart the vast misery of the night.

HE CLIMBED down and went inside the church. It was ablaze with lights. Almost every pew seemed to be filled with women and children. There were cots in the aisles. Only the chancel was darkened, but enough of it could be seen to give this confusion and babble a marvelously beautiful background. The white reredos shone ghostily in the distant gloom.

The sharp cry of babies came to his ears, and the voices of women calling them to hush—foreign voices, Polish and Hungarian and German.

Here and there were other women, wearing white veils. The Red Cross call for blankets also brought out the men and women of the local chapter. That was one benefit the war brought communities in America. It made their women ready for emergencies such as this. They had been here most of the night, young women and heavy matrons, sleepless and untiring, kept awake by the stimulus of the succor they were able to give and knew to be needed. Women are that way; they can stand more of it than men.

Midway down the aisle he encountered his sister. Claire had a baby in her arms, a tousle-headed Polish baby that insisted on crying.

"Sylvia's here—somewhere!" she called, as he spoke to her.

He went on up the aisle. Finally he found her. She had O'Toole in tow—O'Toole sans cutaway and in shirt-sleeves, but with his red vest blazing unashamed. He was carrying a bucket of water and Sylvia the cups, administering it as she went along.

"We're too busy to talk," she laughed, as she turned her back on him to hand a child a cup.

"Yis, boss; we are," O'Toole added. "And me carryin' the holy water. I nivir thought I'd live to see the day when I was altar-boy in a Protestant church."

Jim grinned.

"All the same, you had better knock off pretty soon. Get the girls to come outside to the Red Lion for a bite. Are my people here?"

"Your mother an' father and Misther Hunther is in the vistry with the minister." And O'Toole stepped along to catch up with Sylvia.

He found them seated round a table—his mother and father, the rector, Mr, Boswell, the mayor, and Mr. Hunter. Beside him sat the elder Mr. Sanderson, who was head of the Corchester branch of the Red Cross. They were laying plans for the permanent relief of the people made homeless that night.

Two hundred and sixty-odd were burned out completely. Another hundred had had their houses dynamited or lived so close to dynamited buildings that it would not be safe for them to return for several days. The fire was just getting under control. In another hour they would have it in hand. The present problem was what could be done for the people without homes and work. For the Kemp works gave employment to three thousand hands.

These were the problems the self-elected relief committee were discussing as Penbury entered the room. They all looked up as he came in.

"You're just the fellow we want!" Hunter called out. "Sit down, Jim." In the rush of subsequent events, he evidently had forgotten their quarrel of the evening before; his tone was cordial.

"You've done wonderful work to-night, Mr. Penbury," the rector addressed him. "In fact, were it not for you, this relief work would never have gotten under way so quickly."

"Well, my restaurants justified their name," he replied, coloring. "They actually did roll."

"Did the people patronize them?" his father asked.

"Rather! We've fed something like a thousand people since ten o'clock last night."

"You'll soon be able to retire," his mother remarked, beaming upon him.

"Hardly that."

"Not if he runs his business as he did to-night." It was the mayor this time. His remark seemed disconcerting; at least none of the others in the group seemed to understand exactly what he meant. "You know, he did this all free of charge," he added.

Hunter turned abruptly in his seat.

"Did you, Jim?"

James nodded.

"Good boy!" Then he smiled wryly, adding, "That is better than being a third-rate lawyer, isn't it?"

"Are you going to take up law?" Mr. Sanderson, who was slightly deaf, misunderstood Hunter's remark.

"No, Sanderson," Hunter explained; "I was just saying to Jim Penbury that to-night he has proven himself a fine citizen by feeding the people free of charge at his lunch-wagons. That was better than his trying to be a third-rate lawyer."

"So you are not going to give the wagons up, then?" Sanderson asked.

Jim caught Mr. Hunter's approving nod.

"Never," he replied.

"Never so long as I've got the money to back him," Hunter added. "He's going to expand his system to New York after January. If I can persuade him, he's coming with us to Jamaica for the next two months, and then we'll start in giving every city of size in America the services of the Penbury Rolling Restaurants."

If Hunter had knocked him over the head, Jim could not have been more astonished. It all came out at one blow. He slumped down in his chair, tried not to look surprised and gulped with unsuppressed amazement. He was too astonished to hear the chorus of "Splendid!" that followed on Hunter's speech.

"Thank you," he managed to murmur, and then, getting a hand on himself, sat up in his chair. "That's awfully kind of you all. But I didn't come to disturb this meeting. I merely wanted to ask you if you didn't think a bite of something to eat would go good just now? I've told the girls to go into the Red Lion and promised them that I'd bring you along. I'm sure you can discuss this relief work just as well in there."

THEY followed him out, the men remarking that they would enjoy a smoke, too. So he helped his mother into the wagon and stood on the curb for a moment while the others lighted their smokes.

It was still dark, although the wind had died down and the bitter cold still gripped the air. Old Mr. Sanderson said he guessed he'd get into the Red Lion and Judge Penbury seconded the idea. But Hunter lingered behind.

"Just one moment—I want to see something." He glanced at his watch. "Yes; she ought to be coming along now. Her train's almost due." He looked up the street. Just then the Hunter limousine turned the corner by the Congress and headed down Main Street toward the station. As it passed the church, it slowed down and Hunter raised his hat. Inside the car Penbury recognized Madeleine Smith.

"I managed to have a little talk with her to-night—ran off for a few minutes after I got things going in the church." Hunter's hand pressed on Jim's arm. "Sanderson wasn't to be found. Left for New York on the ten-o'-clock. She had threatened him with dire things, and he skipped. As the next train went at five this morning, I offered her the car. She's perfectly harmless. The boy will stop back for us to take Sylvia and me home."

"So that's that," Penbury replied.

"Yes, Jim; that's that, thank God!"

"And thank you," Penbury answered.

"Thank me, nothing! If I were a younger man, you ought to thrash me."

Penbury grinned.

"Shall we go and eat?" he suggested.

They pushed back the door. Sylvia moved along the counter seat to make room for him. O'Toole beamed down from beside the stove.

"What'll we make it, Misther Penbury?"

"Flapjacks, of course!" he said.

"With a coffee on the side," Sylvia filled in before he could finish.

The Pearls *of* Novgorod

Inside Stories of the Secret Service in Russia

A Soviet Official Who Had Been a Tailor, the Lady He Loved, an Historic Necklace and a Remarkable Message in Cipher Are the Ingredients of One of Zarin's Most Baffling Cases

By Hugh S. Martin

Formerly Captain, Intelligence Service, U. S. A.

THE smoldering fires of hate and envy burst into sweeping flames of revolt. The suppressed passion of the mob was unleashed. Great Russia staggered dazedly upon the threshold of ruin. Civilization stood aghast as the red hands of destruction were raised above a people stunned, struggling blindly before the specter of impending doom.

There was a lull, which lent temporary respite, revived fleeting hopes—the ominous lull which forebodes disaster.

Then came the storm—the reign of terror—the red terror of fanaticism—the ruthless madness of a desperate minority seeking to break the wavering will of a bewildered majority—the bloody recklessness of a mob gone wild, spurred on by visions of untrammeled license, of lust.

There were victims of this mob who stood their ground and perished. There were those who fled beyond the borders. There were others who remained behind to combat the enemy with his own weapons. They became Bolsheviks in order to fight Bolshevism.

Among the latter was Zarin. He retained his little office overlooking the Field of Mars, held his old position in a service reorganized and placed under a new command and gained the absolute confidence of the leaders.

Feeling now that he was firmly established with the proletarian dictators, he sat in his office, thinking of the future. But his thoughts had not proceeded far along this channel when they were checked by the unexpected appearance of Commissar Pavel Levinsky, whose manner clearly indicated that he was laboring under stress of some great mental turmoil.

Entering the office with the bruskness of authority, the commissar slammed the door behind him, and even before he had seated himself in the chair to which Zarin pointed, launched forth into a passionate recital.

His mistress had been killed, and the pearls of Novgorod had been stolen. The thief had been captured, but the pearls were still missing.

Until the fortunes of revolution had smiled upon him, Pavel Levinsky had been for many years a fairly prosperous tailor in the city of Kief. And it may be said that he had been a tailor of no mean ability. Indeed, among his distinguished clientele was no less

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a person than the fastidious head of the great Pavlovsky estate, Prince Orlof.

During the weeks immediately preceding the October uprising, Levinsky had been a frequent visitor at Pavlovsky, receiving instructions prior to beginning work on the prince's winter outfit—an undertaking which, alas, was never completed.

An observant eye would have detected that the tailor was displaying far more than a passing interest in the interior of the magnificent Pavlovsky château and that something more than a mere casual acquaintanceship existed between him and Nina, the personal maid of the elderly princess. Nina was a girl of extraordinary attainments who, during her one year at Pavlovsky, by a judicious exercise of ability and remarkable tact, had risen from the lowly rank of assistant kitchen-maid to the most exalted position in the household.

The Orlof family consisted of the elderly prince and princess, the young Prince Alexander—a student at Rome—and the beautiful and talented Princess Elena, who had been traveling abroad for two years.

Closely bound with the history of the House of Orlof was that of the pearls of Novgorod. Perhaps the famous pearls of the deposed czarina were more magnificent—but only an abiding loyalty to the crown would have brought such an admission from the master of Pavlovsky.

When the storm of revolution reached the Orlof estate, the perfidious Nina lost no time in carrying out plans which she had waited long and impatiently to execute. In this she counted on the assistance of Levinsky. According to agreement, he was to have certain objects of value which were in the house, as well as a share of the family jewels and gold. Nina was to get the pearls of Novgorod and sundry minor articles of value.

But the girl was not to be satisfied with mere loot. The spirit of the new era surged within her. She had never liked the old prince, so she appeased her dislike by sending a bullet through his heart. She held nothing particularly against the princess—except that she was of the nobility and, therefore, unfit for the new scheme of things. Instead of sending a bullet through her heart, as she had intended, the maid wavered in her aim and left the poor woman with a bad wound in the shoulder.

Laden with their newly acquired fortune, Nina and Levinsky drove into Kief, where the latter forthwith declared himself liberated of all domestic encumbrances—consisting chiefly of a wife and six children. A few days later, the pair arrived in Petrograd, where they picked out for themselves one of those palatial apartments on the French Quay which had been so hurriedly vacated by their former occupants under the persuasive pressure of Red Guard bayonets.

Levinsky, meanwhile, suffered himself to accept the responsible office of Commissar of Confiscated Goods, and for many weeks he and his new mate had lived in all the glory of proletarian preeminence—until the tragedy which had brought the commissar to the famous secret agent.

ZARIN succeeded in calming the agitated commissar to such an extent that he could speak and answer questions in a fairly rational manner. Eliminating countless repetitions, irrelevant ramblings, interjected with wild threats and mournful lamentations, Zarin was able to piece together the following facts:

On the afternoon of the day before, Nina had dispatched her maid to the food commissariat to draw weekly rations for the household. About half an hour after the maid had been seen to leave the building, there came from the Levinsky apartment a piercing scream, which was cut short by two pistol-shots fired in quick succession.

A woman in the apartment immediately below, upon rushing out, noticed a man with heavy black beard descending the stairway. She fled to the street and began screaming for help, whereupon the bearded man, who had closely followed her, hastened his steps and, at the approach of a patrol of Red Guards, ran rapidly along the riverfront. Ignoring an order to halt, he was shot down and severely wounded. Later, he was conveyed to a near-by prison hospital.

In company with two of the guards, the neighbor hastened up the stairs to the Levinsky apartment. Nina was found upon the floor of her bedroom, mortally wounded—shot twice through the breast. With a powerful effort, the dying woman managed to whisper, "He has stolen the pearls." A few moments later she was dead.

Levinsky, having been summoned by telephone, arrived just after she had breathed her last.

An examination of Nina's jewel-case showed that the famous pearls alone were missing. A search of the apartment had disclosed nothing but a revolver, with two empty chambers, which lay upon the bedroom floor.

Before the prisoner had been taken to the hospital and also after his arrival, he had been thorougly searched in the presence of witnesses, but the pearls were not to be found. Every inch of ground which he had covered, from the door of the apartment to the spot where he had fallen, had been carefully gone over, but without avail. He could not have given the pearls to a third person, because he was in plain view of the neighbor and the guards from the time he left the house until he was shot—and nobody had been seen to pass near him.

"How far along the river-front did the man run before he was shot down?" inquired Zarin.

"Perhaps a hundred feet."

"Then he might easily have thrown the pearls into the river."

"That was my first thought," Levinsky said. "But those who saw him say that he did not throw anything away."

"Excited persons do not always see clearly," Zarin observed.

"I know that," replied Levinsky sorrowfully. "But why should he steal them and then throw them into the river? Think of their value! They are worth a million gold rubles if they are worth a copeck."

"Have you any idea who committed the crime?" Zarin continued.

"Not the slightest," Levinsky answered. "Nobody has been able to identify the prisoner, and he refuses absolutely to speak. He must be a foreigner, because the only thing found upon him was a small French-Russian dictionary. Suppose he should die without telling what he did with the pearls. What would I do? Oh, what a calamity!"

"When did *madame's* maid return?" inquired Zarin.

"Not until after I had arrived," said Levinsky. "She brought a week's supply of provisions and, as it takes at least an hour for one person to go through the routine of drawing such an amount of supplies, she could have had no direct connection with the crime."

"Now I am going to ask you a very frank question," Zarin said. "Do you know whether the woman who was killed had been involved in any past love-affairs?"

Levinsky flushed. While he was plainly more affected by the loss of the pearls than by the loss of Nina, still, the thought that she might have been unfaithful had never occurred to him. Zarin's question caused him to think—and thought brought on suspicion. Suppose the woman had been deceiving him.

"If she has had any love-affairs, I do not know of them," the commissar replied, after some hesitation. "But, then, how can I be certain? But why do you ask? Do you think it possible that the stranger——"

"Perhaps a scorned lover seeking revenge," Zarin interrupted. "But that is merely a passing supposition—a remote possibility. Perhaps we do the woman an injustice in even referring to such a thing. You will understand, of course, that I am simply seeking all possible information which might have a bearing upon the case. And now that we have gone over the matter rather thoroughly, I would like to have from you an order to the effect that you have placed this case solely in my hands."

Levinsky took up a pen and wrote the order which Zarin dictated.

"As I understand it," Zarin continued, when the commissar had finished, "the body of the dead woman has been removed to the undertaker's and I am at liberty to visit the scene of the crime."

"Only the maid is now at the apartment," said Levinsky. "I shall 'phone her to remain there until you arrive. And let me impress upon you," he added, rising to go, "that if you solve this mystery, I shall see to it that you are properly rewarded."

THIRTY minutes later, Zarin arrived at the prison hospital and, after displaying his credentials, asked permission to see the wounded prisoner.

"You may see him, but little good it will do you," replied the warden. "He died an hour ago."

Zarin was keenly disappointed. His one hope had been that he might be able to draw from the man an expression or a word which might give him a clue.

Accepting the warden's invitation, Zarin followed him into the prison office, where he took a seat beside a table and produced a cigarette-case.

"Did the man make any statement before he died?" he inquired, as the warden lazily settled himself into a large desk-chair and accepted a cigarette.

"Yes," said the warden, with the air of one who is about to divulge important information. "Early this morning he asked for his dictionary and paper and pencil. That was the first time he had spoken. Thinking he wanted to disclose what he had done with the pearls, I complied with his request. Then he asked that he be left alone for half an hour. Not desiring to hinder him in any way, and knowing that he was too badly injured to attempt escape, the guard was removed, and when the time he had asked for was up, I returned to his room. The fellow may not have been insane when he committed the crime, but certainly he had become so by now. All I found on the sheet of paper was a roughly drawn picture of a snake coiled round a rod. Above the snake he had written the words: 'To the owner of the pearls of Novgorod.' Round the edge of the sheet he had drawn a border of leaves and flowers.

"As I took up the paper, he asked that I have it sent to the owner of the pearls. When I told him that the owner had died from wounds received at his hands, he said, 'Then have it hung in her apartment, and at the end of nine days it will bring luck.'

"Believing that he had quite lost his reason, I thought I would humor him, so I promised to comply with his request. When I said that, he looked at me with an expression I hope I may never see again. 'Remember,' he said, 'if you fail to grant the request of a dying man, a curse will rest upon you.' Those were his last words. He died a few minutes later."

"Did he speak with a foreign accent?" asked Zarin.

"Yes; somewhat. I think he may have been a Frenchman."

"Have you the paper on which he drew the picture?" pursued Zarin.

"Yes," answered the warden. He unlocked a drawer of the desk and took out a large envelope. It contained the French-Russian dictionary and the drawing. These he handed over to Zarin.

Unfolding the paper and spreading it upon the table, Zarin scrutinized it closely. A moment later he replaced it in the envelope.

"You say the man wore a beard," he continued. "About what was his age?"

"Not more than thirty."

At that moment the warden was called from his office to the rear of the prison. As he left the office, Zarin reached quickly for the envelope, and in another moment was deeply engrossed in a study of the paper it contained.

To a casual observer, the picture drawn there was merely the work of an insane person. But to the trained eye of Zarin, whose long experience with codes and ciphers had made him perhaps the greatest living master of his profession, it was evident that the scrawlings on the paper had been made by a very sane person.

IT WAS neither the snake coiled round the rod nor the written message which attracted his attention so much as the border of leaves and flowers. It was composed of eight distinct drawings, each representing a long stem, with leaf-bearing branches and a flower at the end of the stem.

Some of the branches bore no leaves at all; some had six; some more, others less, ranging from eight to none at all. For example: On one stem, which lay horizontally at the top of the sheet on the left, were three branches above and two below. The first of the three bore three leaves; the second had four; the third had two. The two lower branches had one and three respectively.

Now, if each leaf stood for a number, the upper branches would represent the figures 3-4-2. The lower one would represent the figures 1-3.

Thus, on the first stem of the border—assuming that it was the first—there were two combinations of figures represented: 3-4-2 and 1-3.

Turning his attention to the next branch and following the same method, Zarin resolved it into two groups of figures: 1-3-2 and 2-4.

What did these figures stand for? Surely no man could carry in his mind any considerable number-code. Zarin's experience in deciphering such codes had taught him that there must be a key. What, then, and where could be the key in the present case? Obviously it was in the dictionary.

Assuming that the first figures referred to the page-number and the second to the word-number, Zarin took the first combination; 342 and 13. The thirteenth word on page 342 was "my."

Taking the next combination, he turned to page 133. Counting down, he found that the twenty-fourth word was "dearest."

The next stem, he found, represented the combination 4-7-6 and 3-4. The thirty-fourth word on page 476 was "little."

The message thus far, therefore, was, "My dearest little—"

As he was about to take up the next combination, the warden returned.

"Well, what do you think?" was his immediate question.

"It is a bit early to say," replied Zarin. "But I am going to ask you to let me take this drawing and the dictionary. Perhaps they may be of some assistance in my investigations."

"You are welcome to them," replied the warden. "Only, I can't forget that expression on the prisoner's face. You know what they say about a dead man's curse. *Radi Bogal* How will I ever sleep again?"

"I promise you that the dead man's wishes shall be respected," was Zarin's reply.

FROM the prison, Zarin took an *izvoschik* and drove rapidly to headquarters. After another examination of the drawing and a few minutes spent in the record department thumming through several old volumes, he found what he was searching for. Then he reappeared and directed the driver to proceed to the address of Levinsky's apartment on the French Quay.

His ring at the door was answered by a frightened-looking girl.

Zarin produced the order from Levinsky and the girl readily admitted him, for Levinsky had 'phoned her that he was coming.

"Are you alone here?" he inquired.

"Yes; all alone," replied the girl in a weak, trembling voice.

"Then I shall ask you to remain outside in the corridor and permit no person to enter until I have finished.

Without a word, the wretched girl obeyed, and Zarin found himself alone in the apartment of Commissar Pavel Levinsky.

Glancing hurriedly into the room where the woman had been slain, he passed into the dining-room; thence through a long corridor to a small servant's room.

A few pieces of feminine apparel were strewn upon the bed. There was a small trunk in the center of the room, open and half packed. The drawers of the single chiffonier were empty. There were no pictures, no papers, no letters to be found. Carefully unpacking the trunk, Zarin had almost reached the bottom when his hands rested upon something which had been carefully concealed within the folds of some newly laundered lingerie.

It was a small French-Russian dictionary, exactly like the one which had been found upon the prisoner. Within it was a sheet of folded paper, which Zarin opened with a smile of satisfaction.

In the center of the sheet was a pencil-sketch of a snake coiled round a rod. Around the edges of the sheet was a border of flowers, with stems, branches and leaves.

Quickly reaching for his note-book and pencil, Zarin jotted down a long column of combinations of figures. There were many more than he had found in the drawing of the prisoner. Having finished, he replaced the sheet within the dictionary, which he deftly returned to its hiding-place. Then he began carefully to repack the trunk. He had almost finished his task when he heard a stifled cry behind him. Turning quickly, he beheld the maid.

"What are you looking for?" she demanded indignantly.

"My dear young woman, I am looking for anything which might throw a light upon this perplexing case," Zarin replied. "But why have you come here when I requested you to remain outside?"

"Because I—I am too weak to stand there," said the girl. "I am ill. This terrible thing has been too much for me."

Zarin had risen and moved toward the door. The girl looked relieved. Her eyes grew somewhat brighter; her expression was less apprehensive.

"Won't you please let me rest here for a while?" she continued, entering the room and dropping wearily upon the bed.

"Of course," replied Zarin. "I think there is nothing further I can do here."

But he did not leave the room immediately. He expected that the girl would say something. And she did.

"Have they—found the pearls?" she inquired falteringly.

"No," replied Zarin. "Not yet."

Again there was a pause.

"Won't the—prisoner—tell what—" she began uneasily.

"No; he will not tell *now*," Zarin replied.

A strange expression came over the girl's face. First, there was a look of relief, which quickly changed to one of great anxiety.

"You say he will not tell *now?*" she continued, unable to suppress a tremor in her voice.

"No," answered Zarin. "The prisoner was very badly wounded. He is dead."

Zarin did not look at the girl. It would have been a heartless thing to do. Nor was it necessary. Without another word, he passed into the corridor and made his way to the magnificent library.

Selecting a chair in a dimly lighted corner of the large room, where he could readily conceal his work in case any one should appear, he took out his note-book containing the columns of figures he had jotted down in the girl's room and, with the aid of the dead man's dictionary, began deciphering the message. As he found the word representing each combination of figures, he wrote it down on a page of his note-book. Finally he was in possession of the following message:

> Sorry you took advantage of my absence and acted so rashly. Now all is lost. Am leaving this in old hiding-place in hope that you may find it if by any chance you should manage to escape. I shall go to Tundra, and remain until it is safe to return. L. does not suspect me as yet.

Rising from his chair, Zarin made his way back to the girl's room. The time had come to act. As he reached her door, he called out if he might come in. There was no answer. Pushing open the door, which stood slightly ajar, he entered. The girl had disappeared. On a small table by the side of the bed, she had left a note, written on an unfolded sheet of paper. Zarin picked it up and read:

> Mr. Levinsky:
>
> I cannot remain in this terrible place any longer. Am leaving my trunk, because I have no means of taking it with me. When I am settled again, I shall call for it. Anna Koslova.

Zarin saw that the trunk was closed, but there was no lock. Leaning forward he opened it. The girl had taken with her the greater part of her clothing. The dictionary was gone.

As Zarin closed the door of the apartment behind him and stepped into the street, a look of deep exultation was upon his pale, usually expressionless, face. Walking slowly back to headquarters, he consulted a map and found that the village of Tundra lay some twenty versts to the north, on the road to the Finnish border. It was just one o'clock. There was no reason for haste. It was, therefore, not until he had partaken of a hearty lunch that he made his way to an *izvoschik*-stand and, after a short consultation with a driver, drove off in the direction of the Finnish road.

At THE first outpost, where all persons were stopped and examined by armed guards, Zarin displayed his credentials and was passed.

"By the way," he remarked to the chief of the guard, "did a young woman carrying a bundle of clothing pass here recently?"

"Yes," answered the guard. "She passed about an hour ago. If you know her name, I have a record of it on my books here."

"Was it Anna Koslova?"

The guard consulted his records.

"That's it—Anna Koslova," he replied, adding, "She had a general pass, showing that she was in the employ of Commissar Levinsky."

"Thank you," said Zarin. And he was driven away.

It was perhaps half an hour later that he caught sight of the girl straggling along far down the road. Once she stopped and glanced hurriedly behind her at the approaching vehicle, then turned and walked rapidly on. As the *izvoschik* caught up with her and she moved aside to permit it to pass, Zarin ordered the driver to stop and, alighting, walked directly up to the astounded girl. She gave a start as she recognized the man who stood before her, and her weary face turned deathly white. Dropping her bundle, she stood still, terrified.

"You need have no fear," said Zarin in a low, reassuring tone, stepping forward and picking up her bundle. "If you will permit me, I shall be happy to convey you to Tundra."

"But how do you know I am going to Tundra?" she asked, after a pause in which she had somewhat recovered herself.

"Come," he said, with a slight smile. "There are many things I shall explain to you—but not here."

For an instant the girl hesitated; then, without a word, she stepped forward and entered the vehicle.

Not desiring to speak freely within hearing of the driver, Zarin said but little. The girl, apparently understanding, remained silent during the journey. Occasionally she would cast a quick glance at the pale features of the man who sat beside her. There was something about him which inspired courage. Surely he must know that she was fleeing from Petrograd, and yet—he was assisting her.

IT WAS late in the afternoon when they came within sight of the little village of Tundra. The driver inquired where he must go. As Zarin turned to ask the girl where she desired to be taken, he saw that her large, dark eyes were filled with tears. She had heard the driver's inquiry, but had remained silent. Zarin merely motioned to the driver to go forward.

When they reached the center of the village, the driver pulled up near a large shed where travelers might rest and feed their steeds. Taking up the bundle, Zarin alighted and assisted the girl to the ground, directing the driver to feed his horse and be ready to start on the return-trip within an hour.

"I shall leave you here," said the girl.

"I came here for the purpose of talking with you," Zarin replied. "I shall not leave until I have done so. Have you some place we could sit down?"

The girl looked up through large, tear-dimmed eyes, as if she were striving again to fathom the impenetrable calmness of her strange escort.

"As you will," she answered, and, turning about, walked down the road past a long row of houses and into a winding pathway which led to a small hut. As they reached the door, she turned to Zarin and said,

"Wait here for a while.

She entered the place and Zarin sat down on the rude door-step to wait her return. From within he caught the muffled sound of voices. Then there came a low cry, followed by a woman's sobbing. Zarin recognized the voice of the girl seeking to console her weeping companion.

After a time there was quiet, and then again came the sound of low voices. Shortly, the girl reappeared at the door.

"Please come in," she said.

Zarin followed her into a small, scantily furnished room. In a corner, sitting in a cane chair, was a white-haired woman whose face bore an expression of deep anguish.

"This is my mother," said the girl.

Zarin stepped forward and, with a low bow, kissed the trembling hand which she extended. Even in the midst of her grief and poverty, she retained the quiet, unconscious dignity of culture.

"Princess, I am honored," said Zarin, as he released her hand.

The woman gave a start and looked quickly at the girl, who stepped forward and stared squarely into Zarin's face. There was something dangerous in the glitter of her black eyes. There was a menacing defiance in her beautiful face.

"Won't you please be seated, Princess Elena," said Zarin, with a quiet, kindly smile. "Before I leave this room, you will know that I am your friend."

For an instant the girl looked toward her mother; then, returning her gaze to Zarin, she answered,

"I would like to trust you, but I cannot forget that you are in the service of Levinsky."

Again Zarin smiled.

"In a sense, yes," he replied. "But, then, I believe that, until a few hours ago, you yourself were in his service."

"Perhaps I had my reasons," the girl replied.

"And perhaps I have mine."

"Then won't you please explain yourself?"

"That is what I came to do," Zarin answered, again motioning toward the chair which the girl had left. This time, she obeyed.

"In the first place," Zarin began, as he seated himself, "there are certain phases of this case which are not entirely clear to me. If you will permit me, I shall run briefly over a few points leading up to your present situation. If I am wrong, I hope you will correct me.

"At the beginning of the Bolshevist uprising, you and your brother, Prince Alexander, were abroad. At the first news of the revolt, you communicated with each other and, fearing that your parents were in danger, decided to return immediately.

"Upon your arrival at Kief, you found

that your estate had been confiscated, your father killed and your mother badly wounded. Just where or how you found your mother I have no idea, though I imagine she must have been in a hospital.

"You learned that your mother's former maid, after having killed your father and wounded your mother, had stolen certain of the family jewels, including the pearls of Novgorod, and gone to Petrograd.

"Thereupon, you and your brother made certain plans. As soon as your mother was able to travel, the three of you came to Petrograd. First, you picked out this little house, which was to serve as a home for your mother and a rendezvous after the execution of your plans in Petrograd. You hoped to recover the pearls, return here and cross the border to freedom and safety."

THE astonished girl was leaning forward, gazing upon Zarin in intense fascination. Who could this man be? She glanced at the anxious face of the elderly woman beside her.

"Elena, my child," said the woman, "this man is our friend."

Suddenly bracing herself with a quick, determined resolution, the girl turned again and looked at Zarin. Her eyes were steady; in her gaze there was a warning calmness—the calmness which so often precedes the wrath of an overwrought patience.

"I will trust you," she said firmly. "What you have said is true. We found our mother in a hospital, which had been stripped to its barest necessities. She was in the care of Dasha—one of our faithful old servants—God bless her!—and it was through Dasha that we learned all the horrible details of the tragedy which had befallen us.

"My brother—may God rest his soul!—upon learning that Nina had gone to Petrograd with the tailor Levinsky, swore by the blood of our ancestors that he would avenge our father's death. For my part, I swore that I would never rest until I had recovered the pearls.

"We had some money—not much, but sufficient to carry out our plans. First, as soon as my mother was able to travel, we came here and took this little house, which, as you have guessed, was to be her home and, later, our rendezvous. We brought old Dasha with us, and she has remained here with mother. To-day she has gone to a neighboring village in search of food.

"After arranging things here, my brother and I went to Petrograd. Because of Levinsky's position, it was not difficult for my brother to locate him.

"As soon as that was established, I, in the guise of a maid seeking work, proceeded with our plan. I had been away from home for two years, so Nina had never seen me. By the end of the first week, I had established friendly relations with the maid who was then employed at the Levinsky apartment. As you know, under the new order, there are not supposed to be any servants—strictly speaking—but this does not apply to the commissars, so long as they are not too conspicuous in their disregard of the social rules.

"The servant proved to be an honest peasant girl, who loved Russia and was ready to go any length to help her people. Finally, I took her into my confidence and told her exactly why I wanted her place at the Levinsky apartment. I offered her all the money I had to feign illness and ask for a leave. At the same time, I was to appear at the apartment in the guise of the maid's friend, and be recommended by her to take her place while she was away. The girl readily agreed—except that she refused to take a single copeck. Our plan worked perfectly—and that was how I managed to become Nina's maid.

"I soon learned where the pearls were kept. In fact, in assisting Nina to dress, I frequently placed the pearls round her neck. Think of it! Placing my own pearls round the neck of the woman who had stolen them and who had killed my own father!

"I communicated regularly with my brother through a secret code we had adopted. We left our messages beneath a stone in an unfrequented corner of a park near by and, occasionally, I would slip out of the house at night and meet him there. We had planned that, at a favorable moment, I was to admit him to the apartment. He was to take the pearls and come here to Tundra and remain with my mother until I could join them. Then we were to cross the border into Finland and later go to France, where we have friends.

"Evidently my brother's passion for revenge got the better of him and he became desperate. Several times, when I met him, he reminded me that he had taken an oath to avenge our father's death, but I tried to make him see that revenge—as he had planned—could bring back nothing, and that the greatest service we could render now to our poor mother and to ourselves would be the recovery of the pearls.

"You know the rest. During my absence yesterday he entered the apartment. He knew that I was going to the food commissariat and that I would be absent for at least an hour, so he must have waited until he saw me leave, in order that I might not fall under suspicion."

The girl was calm now. She had spoken in a straightforward manner, with no attempt to conceal or evade any part of her extraordinary story. As she concluded, she gazed tensely at the bare floor, while Zarin regarded her with mingled pity and admiration.

"And you have no idea what he did with the pearls?" he inquired.

"None whatever," she answered. "I can only imagine that they were taken from him by the guards who searched him, or else that he managed to throw them into the river."

"And may I ask what you intend doing now?" Zarin inquired, after a pause.

The girl dropped her eyes dejectedly, unable to suppress a deep sigh.

"Now all is lost," she answered sorrowfully. "The little money I had is about exhausted. Perhaps I shall return to Petrograd and seek employment—or maybe we shall attempt to cross the border and rely upon the mercy of strangers."

With an effort, the elderly princess moved her chair nearer to the side of her daughter and, leaning forward, placed her hand gently upon the girl's shoulder.

"My daughter," she said in a weak but calm voice, "you have done all that was possible to bring back that which was ours, and my poor boy has died in the performance of what he considered his duty. Surely we shall get along somehow."

AS ZARIN looked upon the suffering woman seeking to console her courageous daughter, a strange light crept into his eyes. It was not only of them that he thought, but of the countless thousands of others who had been torn from their homes and loved ones and forced to flee as wretched exiles or wander in the wake of poverty and desolation in a country no longer their own.

Upon his colorless cheeks there appeared two faint spots of crimson, and from beneath the black lashes of his narrowed eyes there flashed a look which had sent the chill of terror into the hearts of those who had felt the power of his wrath.

In another instant he was the calm, expressionless Zarin.

"And now that I have told you all," the girl continued, "will you not tell us who you are and why you are showing such an interest in this affair?"

"It is hardly necessary for me to tell you who I am," Zarin replied, "or why I am interested in your affairs. I shall, however, tell you what I have done."

"This morning Levinsky gave me an account of what had taken place. Following that, I went to the hospital to see the prisoner. He had died before my arrival, but he lived long enough to draw a message upon a piece of paper."

The girl half arose in her chair. A great light spread over her face.

"On the paper," Zarin continued, "there had been drawn a picture of a snake coiled around a rod, surrounded by a border of crudely drawn flowers."

"Where is that paper now?" cried the girl, springing to her feet.

"In my pocket."

"And you will—" she began excitedly.

"Wait!" he replied.

Zarin then told of the dictionary which had been found on the prisoner, and how he had discovered that the border contained a hidden message.

"My next discovery," he continued, "was made at headquarters, where I found, by consulting our records, that the snake coiled round the rod was the coat of arms of the House of Orlof. It was clear to me then that the message had been prepared by the young prince, and from its wording I learned that it was addressed to his sister. The fact that he wanted the message sent to the Levinsky apartment suggested that his sister might be there. Naturally, I thought of you. When I searched your room and found the dictionary in the bottom of your trunk, the case was clear. I also found your message in the dictionary. That was how I learned that you intended to come here to Tundra."

The girl had settled back into her chair and merely looked at him in silent wonder.

Reaching into his pocket, Zarin took out a sheet of paper and spread it upon his knee. It was the drawing which had been made by the prisoner. Then, taking out his notebook, he tore out a sheet on which he had written down the deciphered message. Without a word he handed it to the girl.

As she read the message, her hand dropped limply into her lap.

The elderly woman beside her reached forward and took up the sheet to read her son's last message to his sister. Holding it near her eyes, she read aloud:

> "My Dearest Little Sister:
> "Pearls in bottom of jam-dish."

Reaching again into his pocket, Zarin took out a box which had once contained a modest assortment of chocolate-coated sweets.

The girl saw him. Slowly, hopefully, fearfully, she rose to her feet. The elderly princess, grasping to her breast the message she had read, looked on in silent resignation. Slowly Zarin lifted the lid of the box.

There, reposing in all the dignity of their ancestral glory, were the pearls Novgorod.

Reaching again into his pocket, he took out a paper, bearing a seal and signature. It was a pass issued to Anna Koslova and her escorts to cross the borders of Russia.

On THE following morning, Zarin telephoned Levinsky that he had solved the mystery of the missing pearls. Within half an hour the anxious commissar of confiscated goods, together with the chief of the secret service and several operatives had gathered in Zarin's little office to hear his report.

"Before producing the evidence in this case," Zarin began, "I think I should say to the commissar that, in as much as some parts of it may prove embarrassing to him, he might prefer to hear it alone."

"How could the evidence prove embarrassing to me?" Levinsky quickly inquired.

"In that it will produce certain suspicions concerning the woman who was killed."

"Let us have the evidence," answered Levinsky firmly.

"It is very simple," Zarin replied, producing from his pocket the envelope containing the dictionary and the drawing which had been made by Prince Alexander just before his death. He gave a brief explanation of both.

"When I beheld this strange drawing," he went on, "I immediately suspected that it contained some hidden message."

In detail, he explained to them how, by a study of the construction of the border, he had produced the combinations of figures.

As he opened the dictionary and proceeded to demonstrate how he had deciphered the message, his amazed auditors gave vent to unbounded enthusiasm.

Had not Zarin taken the trouble to add a few leaves to certain branches, so as to change just two words in the hidden message, undoubtedly the enthusiasm would have been even greater. But Zarin was perfectly well satisfied with what he got. The message, as he deciphered it before their astonished eyes, even though two of its words were not those which the dying prisoner had intended it to convey, was at least sufficient to satisfy the exigencies of the occasion.

It was a simple matter, by adding a few leaves to the third branch, to change the word "sister" to "sweetheart." It was equally easy, pursuing the same method, to change the word "jam-dish" to "river," so that the message now read:

> My Dearest Little Sweetheart:
> Pearls in bottom of river.

Levinsky rose excitedly to his feet and began rapidly pacing up and down the length of the little office.

"So!" he cried. "Now I see it all! The man who killed her was her sweetheart. Because she comes with Levinsky and lives in luxury, he gets his revenge by shooting her and throwing her pearls into the river. And to think that I was fool enough to trust the wench! To think that I was fool enough to think that I was the only one that counted!" Stopping abruptly, Levinsky turned and grasped the hand of Zarin. "Comrade," he said, "even though your evidence proves I am a damned fool, I congratulate you. You have done what no other man in Russia could have done. You shall be rewarded."

"Behind the Lines," a story of the Russian secret service in which Elmore plays a prominent and thrilling part, will appear in September Everybody's—out August 15th.

The Great Human Story of a Woman

A FLASH OF GOLD

Both Nan and David Face Grave Problems. Hers Is the Consciousness That Marriage Has Not Altered Her Character, Has Not Made Her the Wife She Expected to Be. For David, There Is the Threatened Strike in Kerrigan Street

By Francis R. Bellamy

Illustrations by C. H. Taffs

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

SO IT had happened. That was the thought that dominated Nan Carpenter's mind throughout the evening. She had rehearsed her part as Cleopatra in the pageant, "Egypt," that was to enrich the charities of Clewesbury, had talked lightly, answered questions. But all she thought of was that she was married and that Forrester Stone had kissed her. She was married, and it hadn't in the least made any difference in her feelings. She might let him kiss her again in the motor if he drove her home. What kind of thing was that—what kind of emotion, what kind of idiot, what kind of marriage?

She had to think—think back over the whole business. That meant her whole life. Her father, old Andrew Van Wyck, piling up money. Herself, alone with him and Aunt Minnie. The vague mystery of her mother—some scandal there. She knew that, of course. Knew that the memory of it had lain at the root of her father's queer dislike of her, his distrust, his certainty that she was going wrong.

Then David, her husband—David Carpenter, who was at home now, at the Brotherhood House, tired out from the work to which he gave soul and mind and body as a doctor among the poor of Kerrigan Street. How she had loved him—and did! And still—it had happened.

How? She could remember her curious acceptance of Kerrigan Street. Because it was David's work—not because it moved her or thrilled her. It never had. She could sympathize more with her father and Forrester Stone, calculating the value of such sops to discontent as wealth threw to the poor in settlement houses and charity organizations. Her father and Stone, organizing United Clothing, merging the sweated industries, planning to use new masses of capital to break the growing power of the clothing unions, planning to organize public opinion against the workers. Only vaguely did she see that David was on the other side. His work was not dramatized for her.

Then—her growing boredom. A queer afternoon with Breck Adams in the spring, a stirring in her of that old, half-forgotten desire for conquest. Breck hadn't mattered. Too easy. A lifted hand, a beckoning finger—those would have brought him to her feet. But Forrester Stone—ignoring her, ignoring all women! Pique had made

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her attack him. And now? She had been carried on, swept past her moorings. It had happened. That kiss!

But she would not let Stone drive her home from the rehearsal.

"No," she said, with an inscrutable look in her eyes, as they stood in the broad, tiled hall with the departing players; "I'm going home with Breck."

"Then I'll see you to-morrow at noon," he said.

"Maybe," she murmured, half to herself.

"Maybe?" he retorted in surprise. "Why, it's the last rehearsal before the dress one!"

"I had forgotten," she said simply. "Good-night."

She went down the broad walk toward the motors, a nameless confusion still in her.

"Do you mind if I don't talk?" she asked Breck as they started.

"Silence is golden," he remarked philosophically.

She could not carry on a conversation, nevertheless. Stone had kissed her! That was all she could think of.

That was all she had been able to think of, too, all evening. She hadn't humbled him, hadn't tried to humble him, either. All that was true. And yet it seemed, somehow, absolutely unimportant, as if it had sunk out of sight beside the overwhelming import of the emotional fact. She was married, and it hadn't made any difference in her feelings in the least.

DAVID was sitting in the big chair by the dying fire, she saw at once as she came in and deposited her fur coat on the divan—asleep, waiting up for her. The mere fact gave her a curious lump in her throat as she stood over him a moment. There was utter weariness in the way his right hand, with its brown skin and scar where the Italian had knifed him, lay relaxed, hanging down from the chair-arm. He looked like a big boy, of a sudden—a big boy asleep, waiting for his mother to come in. She kneeled down and pressed his hand to her breast with a sudden movement.

"I'm home, Davie," she said. And there was a catch in her voice.

"Oh!" he said sleepily. He looked at her with pleasant, half-closed eyes for an instant. "No wonder they cast you for Cleo, Nan," he said. "You're a wonder!"

"Don't say that," she said, with odd abruptness.

"It's true, my Nannie!" he retorted.

Long after he had fallen asleep, Nancy lay awake thinking. It was not until just before she fell asleep that a really startling fact occurred to her. Was this the way divorces began, she wondered then, with a cold little stopping of the heart? But she put that from her with what was almost a tiny panic. No; David was the sweetest thing in the world, and he adored her!

Morning, nevertheless, brought with it the practical problem. She studied that all during breakfast and afterward, when David had gone to his study in the Brotherhood House, while she dressed. What should she do with Forrester Stone?

"Do you realize that you haven't spoken two words to me since—since last evening?" he asked her that evening, as they sat on the stairs watching Breck blowing out imaginary whiskers in his astrologer's scene.

"What is there to say?" she countered.

"Well—" he began, and fell silent.

"It only remains to see that it doesn't happen again," she said abruptly.

"I don't think——"

"It mustn't," she said decisively.

"I suppose not," he assented reluctantly. It seemed at moments, indeed, as if he must have dreamed that incident. And yet, it had happened, of course! It—the whole thing—had obsessed him ever since. He must be mad. He, of all men! Mad over a woman—and not even a woman of the world. Just a young girl of an inland city, dressed in an amateur-theatrical dress!

And he would kiss her again, of course. Such things always happened again, and kept on happening, once emotion caught the will by the throat. He would kiss her until her husband knew it, most likely—just as Jim Barnaby had out at Larchmont and Henry Stoddard and Amélie Frothingham at Rye. And he would not give a continental. He had stifled himself to climb the ladder, and he could do what he liked now. Thirty-eight! He would not live forever. It would be worth all Clewesbury just to get her—no matter what old Van Wyck thought.

The girl probably was simply afraid—held down by the weight of conventionality and bourgeois bosh that always held sway in these provincial cities of the Middle

East. That was all. In New York, there would be nothing to it.

He watched her then, as she went through her part rather listlessly.

"You're going to kiss me again, you know," he said coolly, as she took her seat beside him once more.

"Oh, am I?" she retorted. It was a goad to her pride, in a way—the knowledge that the past made it seem likely.

"Yes," he said.

"Let me know when," she said as contemptuously as she could.

"Before Friday," he told her. She would kiss him before he went to New York for the week, of course.

"I see," she returned passively.

"I'm hard hit, Nan," he said abruptly. Somehow, he hadn't meant to say it.

"Don't!" she said.

"But—" he begun.

"Don't!" she said. "Don't say that again!"

And he saw that there were tears in her eyes.

"I won't," he said slowly. After all, she probably didn't like her position—tied to that man. And—and there was probably more to her than he knew or suspected. He hadn't meant anything personal.

HE HAD given Nancy a decided weapon, nevertheless, had he realized it. Why, this was only the dress rehearsal to-night, and then the two performances and it would be Friday! That was the thought uppermost in her mind as she saw David appear at last in the doorway, and her eyes lit up. She would only have to keep up this queer attitude of silence and passivity until Friday, and then she would be free for a whole week to get clear of this whirling maze into which she had fallen.

In a week she would be able to decide just what she would dare do and just what she wouldn't—just what plan she must adopt to crush this new danger which had assailed her so unexpectedly in the hour of triumph. She must deny herself to him pleasantly and easily now, day by day, occasionally assenting to some harmless hour, until the thing was over and he no longer came. There must be no quarrel, of course. Breck would be the first one to see through a thing of that sort. And, then, men were curious. You could never tell what a baffled and enraged Forrester Stone might do. And the whole thing must be kept from David.

Well, there was no sense in being a gloom because of a kiss. That didn't do any one any good. A kiss wasn't the end of the world, either. So long as it didn't happen again. No, no! Mustn't happen again. And she hadn't kissed him, anyway!

She was as good as her word that night.

And an unusually gay Nancy she was, indeed, if gaiety meant playing through her part with curious abandon and laughter, and seeking out the largest crowd whenever she was not "on." There were few moments, however, when she was not watching Forrester Stone to see just how he was taking it. He seemed to sit alone and smoke cigarettes and simply watch her. He should not do that. People would notice him if he just did that. What should she do about that? It was just as well David was along.

She never forgot afterward the curious effect of that night and of the performance on the evening following, when she went through her part with passionate abandon, living each scene to the utmost until the curtain went down upon a really magnificent burst of applause from the élite of Congress Avenue. Only an effort to escape that sense of inevitable encounter with the silent figure of Forrester Stone—that was what most of the evening was to her.

Almost a kind of disappointment in her, perhaps, when they sat round the long table at the Pontiac afterward, celebrating the triumph of the first night, and she realized that Forrester had not been alone with her an instant. And David had been a dear, for once, and had actually come and stayed through everything.

It was fun, certainly, she sighed to David in their apartment about three o'clock, but she didn't know how it would be to have to do it every night.

"You won't go on the stage—and leave me, for just a week yet, then?" he inquired.

She remembered just in time.

"No; we'll try the marriage just one more week," she assented, with a smile. But she stayed awake an hour, feeling oddly taut.

She did not see exactly how Forrester was going to manage it, she told herself, as she went on the next night, and the sound of the violins came floating back into the curious, raw smell of the stage. David was manfully holding his oar by the dahabiyeh, she saw, his cigar held by his side whenever the stage-hands passed. And there was only the final all-night dance out at the country club before the whole thing was over. And Forrester would have to go before that. How would he get a chance to see her now?

She felt a tiny disappointment at that—he had given the impression always of being so masterful, of always succeeding. He surely couldn't be foiled by any such tiny thing as a mere flitting girl. Somehow, he ought to be masterful—and still be foiled!

She sat in her dressing-room quite quietly at the thought, her hands in her lap, her eyes upon the mirror which gave back the golden orange of her silken wrap. Well, it would be quite a let-down after this performance—when he had gone to New York, and there was left only the apartment. It was a let-down almost, now, in these fifteen minutes when she was not needed on the stage.

"Hello!"

She turned quite swiftly at the voice, and her heart beat faster.

"Why, hello!" she returned, imitating the light mockery of the tone. "Do camel-drivers come into Cleopatra's dressing-room?"

"This camel-driver has to catch a New York train in just an hour," Forrester said imperturbably.

"Oh, isn't that too bad?" she said lightly. She could rise and go out behind the wings, of course. And yet she didn't.

He had sat down now on the little bench along the wall, his long robe pulled about him.

"They're all busy, anyhow," he explained carelessly. In the silence, she only nodded. "I haven't thought of anything else except you since two nights ago—of course," he said slowly.

"You mustn't," she said in a tiny voice.

"Why not?" he asked, with just a hint of savageness. "Aren't thoughts free?"

"Not some kinds," she said bravely.

"This isn't just a joke with me," he said abruptly. "I've come to kiss you good-by," he added.

She rose, trembling, and yet aware that outside the door lay safety.

"You daren't!" she said. Her eyes were strangely bright.

"I've got to," he said. "To keep me going for a week."

She edged toward the door at that. Was that just a feint, or did she really mean to carry it out?

"You can't," she said.

"Don't you want me to?" he asked.

"You—you mustn't," she replied at once.

But that was an evasion, he saw at once.

"I—I love you—I want you to understand," he said fiercely. And he drew her to him with arms of steel. Ah, just an instant—a wonderful instant! "Good-by," he said.

And he kissed her again swiftly and went out the door, leaving her by the mirror, a slim figure of lily white slashed with orange, and eyes of darkest gray, in which, deep and somber, burned a tiny, distant golden light.

It was the first time that a realization of the deadly seriousness of the affair woke in Nancy. Why, this was no mere flirtation, she told herself, as she and Breck sat on the stairs of the country club two hours later. Why, he had said he loved her! And he had kissed her. And she had just stood and let him. Such a thing as that could not go on an instant longer. What was she thinking of? That question was eternally in the back of her mind.

TWO mornings later she tore open, with a distinct fluttering of the heart, the envelope the postman brought to the apartment box. She recognized the heavy superscripture before she did this; and held it in her hand a breathless second until she recollected that David had said he was going over to the study—and must have gone.

DEAR NAN:

New York seems very gray and prosaic after "Egypt" and the charms of the Lyric and the Edmunds' Turkish rug. Perhaps it is even grayer because I find I must stay until next week now—and so cannot be on hand for the counting of the money. Will you so inform your father and the Brotherhood board? I told them there was a chance. F. D. S.

And that was all!

For a moment she was conscious only of an inexplicable disappointment and a curious relief—he was not coming back at the end of the week! And then she tore up the letter hastily and watched the fragments burn in the smoldering log fire. Well, perhaps this was Providence. Perhaps this was her chance to end their relation. She would have time to recover her self-possession now before she saw him again.

"Won't you be glad to have me home again for a little?" she asked David at supper, a little pathetically. Why, in God's name, was she what she was anyway?

"I will," he said promptly.

"I haven't hardly kept the place decent since that old 'Egypt' began," she added.

"It looked all right to me," he remarked.

"You're a dear, Dave," she said penitently. "Anything would look all right to you. I felt like a criminal last night when I went to the theatre and saw your rubbers by the door. You don't ever remember them unless I remind you, do you?"

"They are rather elusive," he said, "those rubbers."

"And what's become of that cape of yours?" she inquired.

"Why—I suppose it's around," he said.

"Dave!" she exclaimed.

"What?" he asked calmly.

"What did you do with it?"

"Why, I let Mrs. Tomazolli take it for an evening," he said uncomfortably.

"And who might Mrs. Tomazolli be?" she inquired.

"She's a lady who lives over on Grand Street," he replied. "She came to take the baby home night before last, and didn't have anything handy to carry him in. So I—I loaned her the cape. No doubt it is over in the study now."

"Unless you gave it to her," Nancy said sternly. "Did you?"

"I—I don't think so," said David.

"You did!"

"Maybe I did," he admitted.

She rose and kissed him.

"You're a dear!" she said, with sudden emotion.

Yes; he was a dear—a wonderful, sweet old dear, she decided as she tidied up the apartment next morning. She spent the next few days in a sort of orgy of repentance. Why, they had not had Aunt Hat and Aunt Susan down to dinner for weeks, and had not been up to Fitzhugh Street, either! They owed the people over at the Brotherhood House many parties—Miss Haynes and Vera and Miss Lublin. They had not yet had Dr. Musson to dinner, although it was over two years since they were married. What had become of Anton Fechter and that big, yellow-haired Mr. McKim, too—the one who had been a preacher out in North Dakota? Had they stopped coming because they felt funny about "Egypt?"

"Why, I've seen Fetcher every day," David told her. "McKim, too, when he has been around. You know, McKim is a curious man—he appears to be a kind of counsel, adviser of the Amalgamated. I haven't been so busy as you have, you know."

There wasn't a trace of irony in his tone, either, she decided, as she prepared the Sunday-night supper for Aunt Hat and Aunt Susan. She had had a bigger part in the play; that was all he meant. There was no one like David! It gave her a lump in her throat—the way he believed in her.

They were adorable old ladies—Aunt Hat and Aunt Susan—the kind she would never be! Susan, particularly, with her mouselike air of mystery, and the way she had brought out in the bedroom her present for David the last time she had called.

"For his birthday, my dear," she had whispered. "Next Wednesday. I think it's so nice to have people remember. And, then, he's always been our boy more or less, you know."

She thought of little else all through the supper. Monday and Tuesday, too, she thought of nothing but the birthday-party—with many telephone conversations and visits to the grocers and elaborate fictions to David.

It gave her a sort of relief, a sense of making up to David for the desires she had acknowledged, to put Forrester completely out of her mind, to do something definite for David.

SHE almost laughed the next afternoon, after the birthday-luncheon on Fitzhugh Street was over, while she made her little purchases down-town. There had come to her the picture of Hat and Susan quarreling over each mouthful David swallowed, and Hat draining the teapot through the spout just as they left the dining-room and she thought no one would see her. David had been almost embarrassed, too—pathetically so—when he had realized that this was his birthday—thirty-four! And then he had deprecated the clamor. His birthday was not worth it.

Well, of course it wasn't, she had agreed ironically. But she had made him promise to give her the evening as they drove away.

He would have another surprise when he came home at seven, too. She spent hurried hours as the afternoon wore away and she set the table for the grand occasion. But she had it all set and arranged, and little Maria safely hidden in the kitchen, and she herself dressed to receive Breck and Kitty and the others long before it was time. Once she did pause, and a shadow crept into her eyes—as she put away the Nile-green dress and arranged her hair to suit the black evening dress with the gold trimming. But that passed. As she sat in the light of the Persian porcelain lamp, just a little before seven, her eyes that warm golden gray in the lamplight, her white slimness slashed with black velvet, she gave an unmistakable impression of youth and happiness and domesticity. Had anything ever happened to upset the Carpenter household?

She answered the telephone with a little frown of apprehension, nevertheless. Surely David's patients might give him just one evening at home, without breaking their legs or having their babies or contracting appendicitis. Or had Forrester Stone returned? He was due to-day. A tiny shiver passed over her at that. But it was David himself.

"Oh, you can't come—I just know it!" she cried at once.

"That's just it, I'm afraid, Nan." His voice had an odd mixture of regret and strain in it.

"But it's—it's your birthday, Dave.

"I know it, Nan," he said. "But—but I fear this is life or death, this time—and I'll have to get home when I can—you'll understand when I see you." His voice was filled with uneasiness, strangled impatience. "I haven't a second. I wanted to telephone you myself, because I knew you did expect me to-night——"

"But there's a party—" Well, she wanted to say it, she wanted to cry it passionately, so that he would come. But she caught herself in time. She must not be selfish—and perhaps he could get home later.

"But you'll come as soon as you can!" she cried before he could close off.

"Quite late." His voice sounded very distant. "Good-by."

And he had gone, and only the lifeless instrument lay in her hand.

She greeted the gay party with apologetic laughter as they streamed in a few minutes later. Yes; this was what it was to be a doctor's wife. Not even birthdays were sacred—it was one step worse than the golf widow, because illness did not cease with winter and the worm-casts on the greens. But perhaps David would come later—and the surprise-party become a surprise.

She kept that hope during the first few minutes—as long as the supper lasted, in fact, putting away for him a small selection from the supper when it was over and the party had adjourned to the fireplace. But it was only a very small hope—easily overcome by the remembrance of the past experiences when an operation or an emergency case had meant midnight hours at the hospital or over in the dispensary.

THE conviction gave her a sense of neglect, of loneliness, even in the midst of the pleasant conversation and chaff of the little gathering. Breck never had any such pressing engagements, nor did Kenny Watson or any of the other men. Their businesses stopped at five-thirty. Most of the young wives could always count on their husbands for the evening. Why was it necessary for David to be quite so indefatigable, quite so conscientious? It was partly that curious attachment of his to an idea.

Would Forrester Stone be that way, she wondered, staring straight at Breck. The thought brought back, with an unexpected rush, the bottled-up emotion of that forbidden topic.

The atmosphere of the apartment seemed almost insupportable of a sudden as the party prepared to depart an hour later.

"I think—" she began. And then stopped in the midst of her good-night. No; if she said that, Breck would insist upon staying, or upon driving her round the quiet midnight streets, with their banks of snow and clear, black, crystal roadways. She would rather be alone, drive by herself for a breath of the outdoors, without the necessity of conversation.

"Good-night!" she cried to them all down the narrow stairs and out into the keen night.

Relief came to her as she drove over the railroad bridge a few minutes later. Well, there was something of romance, of far places and wide spaces in the freight-yards, anyway—the lines of shining silver making a fairy network of the rails, instead of the grim commercial roadway they seemed in daylight. A kind of relief, too, in the long, quiet distance of Congress Avenue, stretching between the marching street-lamps, far out to where the silent houses vanished in mere black shadows. These things helped.

Unusual emotion came to her as the gray bulk of St. Peter's came into view, bringing back of a sudden that memory of her father standing on the steps, staring after her, the day she was married. He must have had an unhappy life, forever alone in the house behind the snow-covered shrubbery.

She turned the corner, crunching the snow a little on the side, and went slowly down the street, to catch a glimpse of the poplars against the bright, cold stars, to see if there was a light in that old library. Perhaps he was still in there to-night, doggedly finishing the history of the Roman empire. It was just as the house came into view that she saw that some one was descending the steps, lighting a cigarette in the frosty air. And her heart almost stopped.

It was Forrester, instinct told her with abrupt emotion.

Her car practically met him as he turned down the walk toward Congress Avenue. But she did not say anything. Something seemed to keep her dumb, staring at him from the darkness of the seat, as if she waited for Fate to take charge of her existence, just where she had stopped.

He stopped an instant, and then came toward her swiftly—silent until he had reached the car and put one foot upon the running-board.

"Why, hello!" he said. His eyes seemed preternaturally deep—without trace of humor.

"I didn't mean to meet you," she said abruptly. She could not help it—the uppermost instinct in her seemed to be to justify herself, to deny any intent to gratify herself.

"I didn't think that—at this hour," he said, as if she had made the most ordinary remark in the world.

But she sat silent, her hands trembling a little beneath the heavy motor-gloves.

"Are you going in?" he asked.

She hesitated just the fraction of a second.

"No," she said.

Even then she did not ask him to get in—not until it occurred to her what a complete betrayal it was. Any one else——

"Can I take you down?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

He got in then, and turned toward her an instant, closing the door.

"I've missed you terribly," he said at once.

"Have you?" she replied. She had made no move to start the car.

"Yes," he said. And he leaned toward her—closer and closer.

"Nan," he said. And he took her in his arms, fur coat and all, the smell of cold fur mixing inextricably with the perfume of her hair.

"I can't help it, either," she said passionately.

And she buried her face in the soft fur of his coat.

IT WAS a tumultuous, storm-wrecked Nancy who watched the dawn creep into the cold bedroom on Kerrigan Street a few hours later. Little tight lines of anguish crept round her eyes where she lay staring at the ceiling. Marriage a refuge!

Well, she had doubted it instinctively, even back in the garden on Morpeth Terrace when there had seemed no other way. She had doubted it, too, when they had come back to Kerrigan Street and the honeymoon days in Chicago lay behind her. She had doubted it from the first day that she had caught a glimpse of her own nature.

And the one kiss, in the motor on Morpeth Terrace, had blown away the last shred of belief like a mist. Why, emotion had caught at her throat, had taken possession of her soul, just as if David had never been! She had kissed Forrester with her whole soul. It had been no question of his kissing her and being tolerated or allowed!

Marriage was nothing beside that fact.

Marriage had not changed her. It had merely altered the background of her existence, given her new scenery before which to play, changed the characters in her plot. She was the same person that she had been when she had played with Doug Everdell and Tuffy—the same person, only grown up to a more poignant rôle, a rôle that filled her with insupportable doubts.

Was Forrester like that? And David?

Did they think of people as mere jars of wine—thousands of varieties of intoxicating wine, to be tasted, drained and emptied, and then the jar thrown aside for the next comer, until old age or sheer satiety brought down the drinker in the dust? Intolerable thought! God in heaven, just like her mother!

UTTER fear came to her at that, and she rose with a tiny shiver and went out into the kitchen. On the table lay the empty dishes of the little supper she had saved for David the night before. How long ago that seemed! But he had eaten the food, eaten it all, she noticed. He had probably had nothing to eat since the luncheon on Fitzhugh Street until that early-morning supper. He really did not seem to care about anything for himself.

"I'm so glad you're up," she told him almost hysterically, a little later. He seemed so wholesome, so solid, so granitelike, somehow, as he stood in the doorway of the tiny kitchen and asked if he could not carry in the breakfast.

"I could have done with another hour," he remarked whimsically.

"But what did happen last night?" she asked him.

"I got a new secretary," he replied.

"No—really?"

"That was the result," he told her. "She's little, pale, and, I think, Irish—Murphy being the name."

"But I thought you had an operation!" she exclaimed.

"I did," he admitted. "She was only a by-product. Some one pounded her brother over there in Moynihan's saloon. Some union-labor scab argument—and I had to take him to the General Hospital and put fifteen stitches in his head."

"And take his sister for a secretary?"

"I took her home in the runabout." He drank his coffee reflectively. "By George, we don't realize what it is to be the under dog. She was living in a room about four feet square, more or less, under the stairs in a tenement on Allen Street, where the water dripped down the wall from a bathroom on the floor above. And that was home to her. She didn't have any job. She'd been running a typewriter for some cloak contractor over on Grand Street—those tumbled-down brick buildings. I told her I would give her a trial in the study if she would learn shorthand. She's coming to-morrow."

"But Miss Lublin—" Nancy began.

"She is going with Miss Haynes on the State Social Commission."

"Is Miss Haynes really going?"

"Next week," said David. "She's served her time down here, certainly, and they couldn't find any one better equipped."

"No," assented Nancy, her mind reverting instinctively to Miss Murphy. How did all these girls whom David met on Kerrigan Street look upon him? Did any of them ever try to rouse his interest? Poverty had nothing to do with emotion—not much, anyway. "Is Miss Murphy pretty?" she asked abruptly.

"Why, just ordinarily, I imagine."

"Oh!" she said.

Well, David probably wouldn't know whether he was being imposed upon or not, she thought, as she watched him fold up his napkin and then kissed him good-by. Miss Murphy could go through all sorts of antics, and it probably would not occur to David, either, that they were for his benefit or that they meant anything in particular.

What a fine way that was to be! It gave one something real to hang to.

She stared unseeingly at the table before her, aware of the unhappy contrast. Why, things with her appeared to be only a matter of circumstance. She could make fine resolutions and be so brave about carrying them out—until the time came really to do something. And then she was a creature of weakness and passion, without any real will. She really seemed to deceive herself, too; about breaking with Forrester, for instance, when in the back of her mind there had lain during all the days of his absence the thought that when he did return she would see him. She had not made last night's opportunity—no. But she had taken advantage of it at once.

That was not sincerity; that was not a real effort to end a relationship that could not continue. A real effort could end it at once, of course—with one stroke. Surely she owed David that much.

"I can't bear the deception of it," she told Forrester in the Georgian late that afternoon.

"I suppose not," he assented. No need to stress that, certainly!

Van Wyck took a book from the table of a sudden and tore it in two. "Break you like that and throw you aside!"

"I wish I could just tell him everything."

"Only, you can't." Stone seemed to move uncomfortably at that prospect.

"No," she agreed somberly. "He would not understand——"

"No, he wouldn't," Stone agreed abruptly. What an extraordinary idea! It showed all over again how you could never tell about a woman.

"If I could see you—and not have any—anything," she concluded pathetically. It was the first time she had admitted in words that there was any "anything" between them.

"You wouldn't like it," he declared.

She was silent for a moment. Stone felt a kind of desperation for this white-throated gray-eyed girl who sat in front of him with her elbows on the lamplit table. No halfway steps in him! She had confessed what she felt for him already. What was the use, then, of regrets? She might have qualms about her husband, but that was natural—it did not alter the situation. The question was: What were they going to do about it?

All his practical nature awoke at that thought, leaving fine-spun moralities to others.

"No one will blame you—living in that gloomy place," he said abruptly.

"It's not so gloomy."

"You're not made for places like that. No one has a right to ask you—if it isn't necessary, if it doesn't have to be done."

The criticism of David affected Nancy oddly, indirect though the thing was.

"Well, it's David's life," she said.

"Exactly," he retorted. "Not yours."

"But he's only thinking of what he ought to do, I suppose," she pointed out.

"And not of you!" A futile sort of humanitarianism back of this husband of hers, perhaps, Stone decided. The man probably had a streak of sentiment in him, and it led him to try to achieve a little notoriety, a kind of distinction in that way. That desire to stand out from the crowd was in everybody. But there was no use trying to tell it to this self-willed girl.

"I couldn't help thinking of what it would mean to have you with me in New York," he said abruptly. "The place seems made for you. A sort of gorgeous scene of romance—operas, theatres, shops!" He paused a moment. "But it's singularly empty without some one to share it with."

"Aren't there any girls in New York? she asked.

"No Nancy," he told her.

She dropped her eyes at that. Well, of course that was plain love-making. It made her heart beat a little faster. He was so obviously sincere. And yet it was just the beginning of the same old thing. The thrill of it would captivate her in a second, and another afternoon would have passed and she would have done nothing about ending their relations. Where could there ever be any place better than this, either? So public, and plain to view. He could not crush down her resolution here.

If only she could hold to her course and withstand just the few moments of bitterness, the thing would be done!

"I ALWAYS had an idea that New York was just filled with—well, with Nancys," she said, with fine insinuation. "One never knows, after all the movies."

"No; one never does, of course," he admitted. He stared at her in the soft light an instant. "Even if you don't go to the movies." A sudden seriousness had apparently come to him—possibly brought on by the suggestion of ulterior motive in some one other than himself.

"How would you like it if—if I were a flirt?" she inquired, with as much mockery as she could command.

"Better, perhaps, than you would," he said, with veiled insolence.

That roused her, of course—the hint of a threat always did. This time it roused her to action.

"Well," she said, "maybe it is true."

"Maybe," he echoed, with an odd tone of disbelief.

It gave her sudden strength—that tone.

"Well, it is the truth," she said abruptly. "I've only been playing a game with you from the beginning. I've just meant to humble you from the start." She stared at him with what triumph she could command. "And I've done it!"

"Humble me—" he began.

"Yes," she said, with curious vindictiveness; "from the moment you stood in the library reading that book and didn't look up. I decided then I would humble you." She stared at him coolly. "That is really all it has been since—I haven't cared whether you kissed me or not. You can't have me; you can't get me—you're just one of those conceited men who think they can do anything. I've just been waiting for this minute, so you would know that you were good and stung." She rose abruptly, drawing her furs round her neck. "You can take me home now, too. Is that plain?"

Was it plain? Was it plain?

Why, it was like a stream of fire, of blinding oil, to the man who sat motionless at the table. Incredible, stunning, unbelievable! To him, the change in the girl before him was like that in some viper, turning suddenly from a lazy sun-bath to strike venomously, angrily at some sudden, offending foot.

"Why, I can't—quite believe it!" he said.

"Your kind never can," she retorted.

But if it was true, why, it was beyond all good breeding, he thought, as he rose from the table—it was outside all social graces or ordinary courtesy. It was—it was insulting! When she had started the whole thing herself!

HIS lips set into one straight unyielding line as he helped her into his runabout outside the Georgian a few minutes later.

"I'll take you down," he said. By God, he would find out if it were true! Women could not play their tricks on him.

"Only, this is not the way to Kerrigan Street," she said coldly, as they turned toward the lake boulevard.

"It's my way," he returned icily.

"I'll walk, then," she retorted.

"You'll drive."

"As you say." She shrugged her shoulders.

She glanced at him sideways once or twice, but he seemed to have set into some mold of iron, his lips stern, set, his eyes fixed straight ahead.

"Perhaps you have misunderstood me a little," he said, with a curious hoarseness in his voice.

"Oh, I think not," she replied.

"This isn't any vulgar affair with me," he said steadily. "You are the first real passion of my life. I haven't been any saint, of course—men aren't that. But you are the first woman I ever loved. I've known that for two weeks now. Women haven't been in my sphere, except incidentally. The only woman who ever had any hold on me was my mother. She died nine years ago—the day before I got the New England contract in Boston. I had a brother. He knew nothing but women—nothing but women." His voice seemed to die away. "I want you. I want to marry you. I thought you wanted me. I can stand losing, I suppose. I meant to force you to take back your words—when I started. Because I knew you felt something for me. You have kissed me. I don't want that now. After all, you are only a girl. I suppose you didn't know what you were doing."

Yes; she had known what she was doing—she had! And after all, he was sincere.

"I'm sorry, Forr," she said softly. "I did mean to humble you at the start, until you kissed me when I was wearing the peacock dress—I didn't want to after that. Because I—I liked your embrace. I was mad about it, really—I couldn't humble you. I wanted you, just as you wanted me."

He was staring at her with deep, haunting eyes.

"I knew I ought not to want it—I could not have it—I didn't know I could ever feel like that—after being married. And the dressing-room was worse. And last night—last night frightened me. In the Georgian I thought I could hurt you, insult you so you wouldn't come to see me again—so I wouldn't have to try to keep from seeing you——"

"Oh!" he said again. "Youth——"

"Perhaps!" she cried. "But I had to do something—I couldn't keep on seeing you."

"Why not?" he asked.

"Why not?" she repeated in amazement.

"Why, we're not children," he said. "Why shouldn't we see each other, just because of some rule of a blind society? Who cares for any such rule, except to beat it? Life is for us—its rules for us—not to keep us from things. We control society—not it us!"

"But I don't know—" she began.

"I do," he said masterfully. "Love doesn't stop with marriage. It goes on. Life goes on. It shouldn't be spoiled because of blind adherence to some pretty academic idea that isn't true. Love comes more than once. What are our brains for except to satisfy convention, society——"

"But I don't mean that!" she cried. "I mean I don't know—I'm not sure—of myself, what I feel, what it is, how much it is—if it is love—if I ever can love——"

"You!" he exclaimed. "You! Nan! Not love! Why, you are made for love!"

She saw that they were getting nowhere; she was afraid to permit the conversation to continue, and she made him turn toward home.

"I'm going to take the street-car from here," she told him at the square. She wanted to be alone to try desperately to regain some sense of reality, of her old personality.

"But why, my dear?" he asked in surprise.

"Can't you see without my telling you?" she cried softly, bitterly.

"You mean because of David?" he asked.

"Of course," she answered bitterly. "I retain some shreds of decency."

Her whole world of ideas, indeed, seemed to have filled suddenly with great, monstrous shapes. Was there any such thing as love? Or was it a name for a thousand shades of emotion—a fire that blazed high or flickered low with the passing of every personality within its light? Had she ever loved David? Or did she still love him, or did she love Forrester—and was he right—that love came many times, and not once——

She shivered at that, even in the street-car. Why, that was just another view of the endless jars of passionate wine! That was the thing that made life intolerable, that took away all the ground of reality from beneath one's feet, that made of life only a shifting veil of desire where no one's figure could be discerned, where all refuge or haven was denied——

Where no one could be found to-morrow where you had left him to-day!

Could that be the truth?

SHE sat opposite David at dinner an hour later, with a sense of unreality that amounted almost to irrationality possessing her. Was it really possible that she herself, Nancy Van Wyck, was playing such an incredible rôle?

What would David say if he knew what a deceitful creature she was? That was the only name one could apply to such an affair, when one looked on it as the affair of some one else. And yet—it was different. Immortally, endlessly different when she herself was involved. Did every one think that as they followed out some similar course?

She stared at David after dinner, where he smoked slowly before the wood fire, a tiny hope springing up in her breast.

"Do you ever miss Fitzhugh Street and the Lotos Club, Dave?" she asked. Yes; she could break away from the fascination of Forrester, the desire to be with him that gnawed at her heart, if there were something forced, sudden, irretrievable about it.

"Why, yes; I miss them sometimes," he said. "Why?"

"Very much?" she inquired.

"Why, I miss the things we used to do, I think," he said. "You know what I mean—childhood, youth, the gay crowds of girls and boys."

"I see," she said a little disappointedly.

He leaned forward to poke the fire.

"I think I miss the—the little parties, and the Sunday drives and walking to St. Luke's down Fitzhugh Street Sunday morning—the way things used to be. That's it, mostly."

"That's what you really miss," she assented.

"Why?" he asked.

"Why, because I was wondering this afternoon if perhaps we weren't being foolish, spending our lives down here," she ventured tentatively. She only meant the remark to be a suggestion, a tentative feeler.

But it was the first time that it ever occurred to David that her view of Kerrigan Street might not be his. And it roused his emotions oddly. Foolish to live on Kerrigan Street! Why, whatever could have led her to make a remark like that? She had a curious existence, of course, keeping house in this little apartment, going out to market in her whimsical way, attending luncheons and teas and sewing meetings afternoons on Congress Avenue. There was nothing very solid or satisfying about it—it lacked aim and purpose. But, then, all the girls seemed to lead lives of that sort, more or less. They were not like men. And he had encouraged her to keep up all her ties with Congress Avenue—her amateur plays and her little parties with Breck and Stone and Kitty. Did she miss Morpeth Terrace and her old life and the theatre and the riding club and the Thursday Musicale more than she had said? Or was there something deeper than that—some way in which he had been neglecting her?

"Tell me why you're not happy here," he asked her. He had gone over to her on the divan and taken her hand. "You must have some reason."

"Just a feeling," she said.

It was like her, of course—just to have a feeling! She was just like a child in many ways, despite her sophistication in some. But, nevertheless, a feeling had its basis in something. There was a reason of some sort always for her emotions.

"What is it you want?" he asked patiently.

"I want to go away, I think," she said suddenly. "Couldn't we go away for a year or two—couldn't we travel, or—or do something else, something that wouldn't keep us here? Couldn't you do that, Dave?"

"But we can't please ourselves like that, Nan," he said.

"We've got enough money!" she cried rebelliously.

"I don't mean that," he answered uncomfortably. "The Brotherhood House——"

"But why not think of me a little!" she cried accusingly.

It was just a desperate little cry, of course, forced from her by the plain fact of impending defeat. But it had an odd effect upon David.

"Yes; I might do that, I suppose," he said, with an odd sound in his voice.

Repentance flooded her heart instantly.

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Dave!" she cried. She put her arms round him in a little gust of regret. "Really, I didn't mean that!"

But he shook her off and rose, seeking his pipe and filling it with meticulous care, as if he did not trust himself to speak until emotion had subsided.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't mean it," he said then.

She sat on the divan, staring at him, her eyes rather wide.

"But I didn't," she protested in a tiny voice.

"It's true, though," he said. "Kerrigan Street is my life—not yours. I suppose I've been too much wrapped up in what I've been doing to think of you. I thought you were happy, too."

"Please forget it, Dave," she begged him a little blindly.

"But I can't do that, Nan," he told her.

"But you could take me to the Lyric to see 'Kismet,' couldn't you?" she begged again. She leaned over him then, whispering the words first in one ear and then in the other until he could no longer stand the sensation and had to smile. "Do come on, Davie!" she said.

"All right," he agreed at length. "'Kismet' it is!"

"And don't think of it again," she finished.

HOW curiously an idea can color the panorama of our existence!

Like lighting a lantern for David that of Nancy's unhappiness was before the fire on Kerrigan Street, making him stop short an instant to stare at the encompassing shadows. Without it, possibly, it would never have occurred to him that Nancy's view of Kerrigan Street could be any different from his, that any question of his duty to her was involved. And yet that fact stood out clear and unmistakable once he held the lantern high and stared—clear and unmistakable, and wearing the same aspect that it has worn to the makers of achievement since marriage began.

No part for her in this enterprise! How much should she be asked to sacrifice? She was following out no desire of her own, achieving no height of her own heart's desire in the meals she was cooking in the tiny kitchen, in the hours she was spending cleaning the apartment, in the days she was going marketing. She was simply contributing to his achievement.

Just what was he achieving that she should be asked to sacrifice for it? It was intangible, he admitted. And yet it was a perfectly plain thing he was striving for down here, a perfectly plain battle he was fighting. There was no conception of a stable and enduring America on Kerrigan Street, such as he and Breck and their friends held from the Fitzhugh Street of their youth, with its lawns and houses and red-brick public school, its snowball fights and family servants and Sunday-schools, its inherited wealth and traditions.

There was no view possible for Kerrigan Street except that distorted and grimy one that industry gave. Behind Kerrigan Street was a vastly different set of facts from New England or Virginia, from Puritan or Cavalier, from Franklin and Washington and Emerson, from Lincoln or Lee. Behind Kerrigan Street was all the sweep of hovels and mines in Galicia, of village inns and carved cathedral doors in Poland, of wayside shrines and almighty priests in Hungary, the textile mills of Moscow and Warsaw, the whitewashed villages of the Carpathians, the folk-songs and festivals of the sacred villages, the witches' dance at night upon the hills overlooking Cracow. And overshadowing all, burned into its very soul, the memory of the thousand years of struggle for liberty against Church and state and society, against the mailed fist of privilege that knew neither politics nor frontiers nor creeds. That was what was behind these people of Kerrigan Street.

Only a Brotherhood House which stood out against the reactionary, against the self-seeker and the profiteer—a Brotherhood House which stood for the ideals of the real democratic America—could ever begin to win the confidence of Kerrigan Street now.

That was David's fight—what he wanted to achieve. No chance of thrusting Anglo-Saxon civilization down the throats of these thousands of foreigners so long as industrial conditions even faintly paralleled those from which they had come in distant Europe—so long as their fathers and mothers gazed at America with suspicion and unbelief.

That was what this Brotherhood House was for now. It was not an outworn relic of St. Peter's charity, but a symbol of America's good faith and honesty and American democracy.

That was the structure David was trying to build on top of the foundation Miss Haynes had laid by her twenty years of service. For him, it answered that inarticulate cry in his soul—his country! This was doing something for his country. It was the fulfilment of the obligation that lay in some measure on every fortunate American.

Did that answer the question where Nancy was concerned? How much was it worth? Marriage certainly brought a new element into the problem. Marriage with Nancy complicated the thing particularly. She was so much more easily affected by things than most girls. And there had been a distinct sound of unhappiness in her voice, no matter how light she had tried to make of the whole thing once he had noticed it. There was a real reason for that. What should he do about it?

It was not going to be any simple matter to withdraw from this Brotherhood House work, now that he was started on it. Only if her unhappiness reached a point that made it imperative that he give up would he even consider doing so. She was distinctly a person of moods.

"YOU mustn't let Kerrigan Street or my work tie you down, too, Nan," he told her finally. "One of us is bad enough. You've got to hold up our end socially, keep us in touch with our old friends."

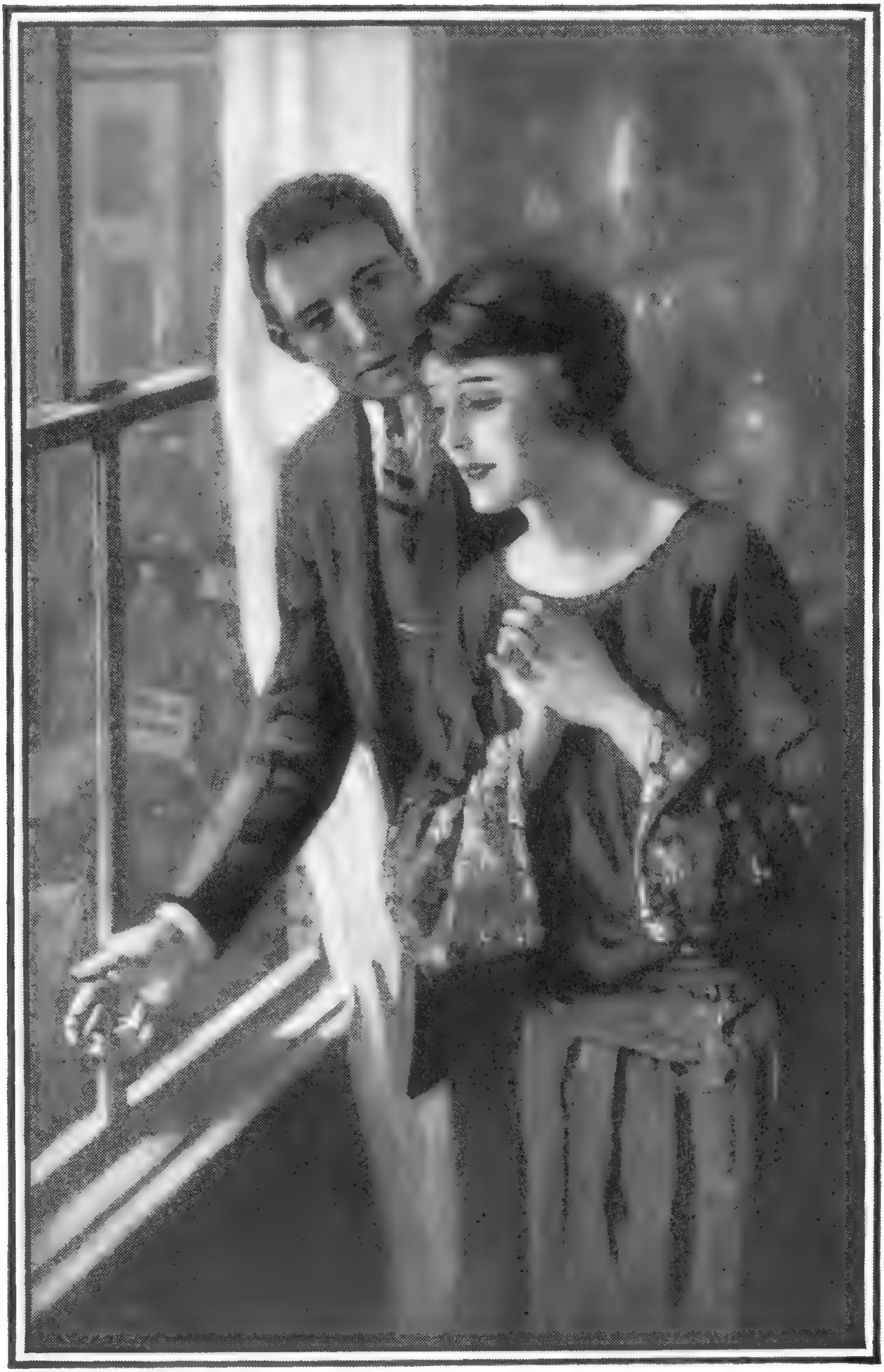
That was his compromise with the question for the time being—a compromise that did not relieve Nancy of her problems.

How could she possibly go on, when Forrester's attraction for her was growing with almost every meeting—when to be with him now was like sipping once more a wine grown older and more potent—wine deepened and colored with passion, inviting her to drink madly——

Forrester apparently had no intention of giving her up, either. Even after she had told him all her intolerable doubts, that there would never be any one like David! He had only answered that by saying that she was a maddening creature of a thousand moods. And had smiled at her with that peculiarly compelling look.

And yet even he agreed that it could not go on forever—that David would find out sooner or later. Why did she not tell him now, and have it over with? That was Forrester's solution. But it would never be hers. Never! She continued meeting him afternoons at the Georgian and later at the country club. A maddening creature of gossamer waywardness! A doubly irritating one, too, because she would not admit that he had completely won her. That was the way she was affecting Forrester Stone. In his view, she was really prolonging the present situation only because she could not bear to hurt David. There would come a show-down, of course.

That conclusion was deepening steadily into a conviction for Stone as the heat of midsummer burned the lawns of Congress Avenue a deep brown, and the street-cars at night were jammed with straw-hatted perspiring crowds bound lakeward, and on Kerrigan Street the babies cried until breathless dawn stole across the crowded fire-escapes and into the gray rooms and a



"But what do they want?" Nancy asked. "Recognition of the union, mostly," David told her. "Oh!" she said. It seemed such a curious demand to her.

moment of cool morning touched them before the day broke once more. Yes; there would come a show-down—and once United Clothing was a reality, he and Nancy need not care what Clewesbury thought.

HOW long would it be before United *was* launched? He speculated on that in the library of the Morpeth Terrace house as he watched Isaac Lewisohn and young Harry making their last stand late in August.

"But it ain't a sure-enough business, I tell you, gentlemen," old Lewisohn was saying. "I been in its since I knew anything. It's got a hard history, Van Wyck. They ain't three of us now out of all them I knew on Jay Street." His voice grew more decided. "Why, I gotta watch that business now like a dog. I ain't going on private cars and yachts like you and Edmunds and Heinrichs and them fellers."

But Van Wyck broke in harshly.

"Well, if it's risky, all the better. We'll kill them off that much easier."

But the old man in the high chair screwed up his lips. He looked oddly in keeping with the rows and rows of pottery shapes of all colors and kinds glowing behind him in the lamplight.

"A pair of shears and some cloth, Van Wyck," he said, "and any one can go in the business."

Van Wyck's impatience with all slowness mastered him abruptly.

"But that don't mean anything," he said. He turned to the pile of letters on the library table. "Here's what Kronig, of Chicago, says. He's taking stock. He don't want money." He stood up suddenly. "Though we'll give you money for every cent you've got in your Jay Street plant if you want it. Stock will be worth its weight in gold. That's all. Kronig is going to make real money under his arrangement. His common stock is just thrown in, the preferred his guarantee. Two shares of common for every share of preferred."

"But I think I want the money," Lewisohn repeated. He stared out the French windows into the darkness. "I don't like stocks, Van Wyck; I don't like 'em."

"Because we paid cash for the Mandelbaum business?" Stone inquired.

Lewisohn looked at him.

"Well," he said doggedly, "why can't you pay me cash, too—so you can do what you like?"

"Because I'm only worth ten million instead of two hundred, Lewisohn," Van Wyck retorted. "I can't buy up every business in the trade." He struck the heavy table a blow with his fist that made the lamp tremble. "Or I would, by God! I'm putting in as much cash as any one except Kronig. Isn't Kronig's judgment good?"

The name of Chicago's textile baron put an odd look in Lewisohn's eyes.

"Jake's no fool," he admitted. "But how do I know he ain't getting money—or some money?" His voice rose higher. "I slaved for that business, Van Wyck—slaved for it. I ain't taking chances at my age, with Rebecca and the two girls on my back—to say nothing of Harry, here." He grinned at his son where the younger man sat by the lamp, smoking a cigarette nervously. Harry Lewisohn bore the whole burden of the business these days. "You can afford it, Van Wyck. There ain't no limit for you." There was a tone of respect in his voice as he acknowledged the resources of the man opposite him. "But I can't."

Van Wyck sat down again.

"Let's talk business, then," he said quietly. He laid his cigar on the table. "I can't buy up every business we need in order to effect the combine, or I would—and cut the thing myself." Lewisohn nodded, while young Harry grinned. "United will guarantee you fixed income on the preferred. I'm here to tell you that the common stock is going to the sky in five years. And, meanwhile, you've got your own business to run just as before; so you're taking no risk. That's one proposition." He stood up abruptly, taking up his cigar again. "The other proposition is that we'll fight you with the combine—and break you." He took a book from the table of a sudden and tore it in two. "Break you like that and throw you aside!" He tossed the ragged paper and cloth into the brass wood-box by the fireplace. "We don't have to have you"—his voice changed again as he relighted his cigar—"but we'd rather have you in than out. That's all."

For a moment Lewisohn hesitated—until the reverse of that offer of Van Wyck's began to float grimly across his mind again.

"I'm with you, I guess," he said then. "Eh, Harry?"

The younger man stood up and flipped his cigarette into the fireplace.

"Why, certainly," he said contemptuously. "We'll take common stock, too. I guess we'll get by."

"Of course we'll get by!" Van Wyck returned. "You can bet your last dollar on that."

He did not know that outside, as the Lewisohns got into the motor—just the two men alone now—the old man was still voicing his unforgetable thought.

"But I could wish we got some money, too, Harry," he said to his son. "I don't like stocks, Harry—" He stared out at the streets where he had once peddled suspenders—before there was any Harry Lewisohn or Rebecca. "I don't like 'em," he repeated.

United Clothing would be on the market by December first, Van Wyck told Stone in the library at the same moment.

NANCY received the news in curious silence.

"Meaning that you won't be in Clewesbury after Christmas?" she inquired.

"Exactly," Forrester returned significantly.

"Oh!" she said.

Well then, she told herself, Christmas would save her. She would only have to keep on resisting until then—and Fate would decide for her. There was much to worry her—make her fearful.

Other people were beginning to notice the state of affairs, even if David didn't. She felt sure of that. She had sensed a a curious atmosphere in the last few meetings of the sewing circle that she had attended and in the gatherings of the Babies' Aid Society—a finely wrought mixture of sympathy and cattiness.

She stared curiously at the gray bulk of St. Peter's as she drove down Congress Avenue in the warm September sunset glow. How odd it was that the few meaningless words Dr. Musson had said in there had had power to change her whole existence! There must be something back of things somewhere that she did not understand to make a ceremony like that so indestructible.

Wasn't it odd that religion had never been mentioned in the Morpeth Terrace house except when Aunt Minnie had had one of her streaks of annoying her brother? Religion seemed to be almost entirely left out of the younger sets on Congress Avenue, too. Did they always feel entirely self-sufficient? Didn't they ever have moments when they wanted some great kindly father to come along and put his arm about their shoulders—some moments when they felt all alone, the way she did?

She spent the next few days pondering that.

"Let's go to church this Sunday," she suggested to David then.

"Where?" he inquired.

"St. Peter's."

"Musson?" His voice sounded a little doubtful.

"Yes."

"Why, yes," he agreed. "We might try him."

She listened to the sermon Sunday morning, her eyes wandering over the well-dressed congregation, curious emotion in her. One ought to find some help here, certainly, if any place. The church must have spent long hours trying to straighten out life for those people it had married unhappily. It must know all about such feelings as she had, from experience with much worse cases than hers. Otherwise, Dr. Musson would not have made her promise all those things about which she had been so ignorant. Or perhaps other people weren't like her.

"Keepers of our inheritance——"

The sermon arrested her a little at that. Did he mean her inheritance? He couldn't mean her inheritance. Her inheritance was her enemy—an unseen enemy that was always creeping out of its dark room to take her by the throat. No; he meant America's inheritance, she discovered a few minutes later. The spirit of the Pilgrims, of the Puritans, founding a land of liberty in a new world—those things David sometimes talked about.

A wave of bitter disappointment swept over her as they walked slowly out of the church at the end of the service. No; Dr. Musson didn't seem to want to talk to you much about yourself and what was happening to you to-night and to-morrow. Perhaps you were expected to find that out for yourself while he told you of the big things that were going on in the world.

She pondered that in silence as she and David drove home through the quiet, pleasant streets. Perhaps that was it. You strangled yourself—and tried for faith and read the Bible.

She tried that then, denying herself even to Kitty while she read the New Testament through at least five times in the autumn afternoons, trying to discover for herself what the secret was. She tried going with David to St. Luke's, and then walking to Fitzhugh Street for Sunday dinner afterward. Surely she and Forrester did not have to be so insane. Surely they could be just friends, without any talk of passion or kisses. It was so pleasant and peaceful after the hymns, to sit here in the old-fashioned house, before the low coal fire in the white-marble-framed grate.

Why could she not convince Forrester of that, and they all be just friends together?

She asked Forrester Stone that question, too, while he listened to her in a curious, cynical silence, half amused, half irritated. This religious spasm was just an inevitable stage, in his view, of the journey toward self-indulgence. She might even be capable, almost unconsciously, of playing upon his emotions by some such thing as this—although heaven knew that wasn't necessary. She probably considered it necessary to make some concession to conventional conscience.

But it was only a question of time, he told her rather cynically.

It was rather tragic, indeed, the way his prophecy seemed destined to come true. Her struggles altogether did not last over a month. At last she seemed to have no will, or no desire to have one.

She had given up.

David smiled at her latest passing, whole-souled enthusiasm for religion, and thought her heart had been touched by the wonder-story of the world this time. How curiously impulsive and adorable she was!

For all of them, nevertheless, Fate was approaching in seven-league boots. It was the hour then in Clewesbury of United Clothing. A. J. Van Wyck had put over a really big one at last, Congress Avenue was telling itself at those dinners of the elect. Buy United Clothing as soon as the books were open! The Clewesbury National would open the books, and Wall Street had underwritten the thing—and Van Wyck's and Edmunds' name guaranteed the sure future of the returns.

Even Aunt Hat heard of the project finally, and asked David about it on one of those rare visits of his in the late afternoon.

"Oh, it will be all right, I suppose," he said.

"But you don't seem enthusiastic," Hat retorted.

"I don't think I am," he answered.

No; the thing was simply a game to Andrew Van Wyck, he couldn't help thinking—a game that he played for the sake of excitement. But it was no game to Anton Fechter and others of Kerrigan Street. It was life or death to them. For them, great combinations like United Clothing meant only a more exhausting struggle to secure living wages—that is, if United adopted the policy of the other corporations that Forrester Stone had a hand in. There was nothing to be enthusiastic about in that.

Kerrigan Street's crisis was coming fast. The voice of Anton Fechter was heard nightly, painting the brotherhood of the future, and calling on his followers to forget nationality and feuds and unite against the employer before the unions were destroyed forever and starvation and competition held sway once more in Clewesbury.

THE first rumblings of that were putting Nancy quite out of David's mind, in early December, when winter's cold, searching blasts had begun to put icy fingers inside the coats of the loungers round the sidewalk gratings of Moynihan's saloon. Anton Fechter talked with David, a week later, in the Brotherhood House study—of the employer's desire for autocratic control of his own business opposed to the worker's right to his job and a share of control over the circumstances of his work.

"They're going to try to get us, this time, I suppose," he said quietly. "But we will be ready for them, my friend." He stared hard at the cigar he was smoking before he put his next question. "Will you let our local use your assembly-room?"

"Why, certainly," David replied. "It's open to all Kerrigan Street—whoever wants to use it."

"By God!" He brought down his fist triumphantly on the table. "By God, I knew it! You are a friend." He turned toward McKim, where that huge bulk of a man sat—he always seemed like some ship just in from a heavy sea. "Didn't I tell you, Mac?"

"Perhaps," McKim responded.

"It's the kids and the women I'm sick for." Fechter's eyes filled with sudden shadows. "We've only got benefits enough for nine weeks."

"Not nearly enough," said McKim.

"But what makes you think it's coming?" inquired David.

McKim was scornful.

"Why, half the halls in the city are tied up," he said.

"The halls?" David repeated.

"Sure," said McKim. "It has the same look South Dakota had. That's where I had my first experience. Though the companies paid half the church expenses there—and the ministers wouldn't open their mouths. We haven't got that situation here, anyway."

"And we won't ever get it," said David abruptly.

It was curious, nevertheless, he could not help thinking, after they had gone and he still sat staring into the fire in the study—it was curious how such duels to the death could go on beneath the apparently quiet, solid society of Clewesbury and never appear except in a newspaper paragraph here and there or in a glimpse of a small mass-meeting in this hall or that. It must take great provocation to make men strike in such desperate causes. It was hard to get any group of society to make any concerted action of any kind. People were always dropping out, or complaining, or leaving associations in the lurch. Either the provocation must be great or the faith of these people in their ideal must be endless to make them so ready to respond to organization.

It was a commentary, in a way, too, on what such things as settlements accomplished. Twenty years this Brotherhood House had stood here. And the union was still Kerrigan Street's only hope.

HE PONDERED that question all through the first weeks of December while the unmistakable clouds of industrial conflict gathered and Nancy wondered what he could be thinking about that kept him so silent and absent-minded.

Had he begun to be doubtful about her, she wondered.

It was the letter-writing stage to which she had gotten by that time in her desperate effort to stave off Forrester—until Christmas could save her. Tiny midnight notes filled with her desperation and desire they were, written each night to give her strength to go one more day each time without seeing him. How hard it was to deny herself when she was alone all day and she only had to step to the telephone to find him!

> It's only really easy, Forrester [she was writing him then], when I am telling you to be good. When I am alone, I find myself wishing I had no conscience or soul or heart or whatever is the matter with me. You really put up with a lot. No matter what I propose, you do it. I suppose it is because words don't mean anything between us. They seem to be just superfluous sometimes—don't they?—poor, weak expressions of what really holds us enthralled. Kitty called me up and said you were taking her to Fred Stone—but what she really told me, beneath the words, was that her attractions had triumphed over mine. They haven't really, have they?

She had not been able to resist a tiny quiver of jealousy, indeed, when she had heard of that. Kitty would probably give anything to get him, she had reflected when Breck had mentioned it carelessly. Well, she herself could lose Forrester, too. Men didn't always remain satisfied with words—not men like Forrester. Just what would she do if jealousy assailed her too?

> There was once a great big giant [she wrote him anent that], and he came upon a beautiful, tiny flower one day in the big forest. And he loved the tiny flower, and thought she was sweet and all things that a flower should be. And he wanted—oh, so much!—to take the tiny flower with him back to his castle by the sea, because he was a nice giant and he thought the tiny flower would like it. But the tiny flower had always lived under a nice, protecting pine tree, and sometimes the pine tree had looked down and smiled at the tiny flower—and everything like that. And the tiny flower was afraid to go, even though there was no one like the nice big giant, because she knew that the pine tree needed a tiny flower right there to look at; and then, while they talked about it, a great big giantess, with a very pretty face, and everything about her that a giant would love, came and said, "Why just look at a tiny flower when you can really love a big giantess like me?" And the giant forgot the tiny flower and went away for years with the giantess, and when he came back at last, the tiny flower had withered and blown away. Good-night, Giant.

Forrester called her up at that, despite his promise.

"I suppose Kitty is the giantess," he said.

"Maybe," said Nancy in a tiny voice.

"But do you expect to write letters like that and have me stay away?" he demanded, without the slightest regard for operators.

"I won't do it any more," she said.

"Though, of course, I wish you would," he said abruptly. "I would have an excuse for breaking the rules then."

"But you won't," she said hurriedly. "I won't write that kind any more."

No, she decided a little later; she wouldn't write that kind—not just that kind. And yet she was only satisfied for the time being because he had called her up and assured her that it couldn't ever be so.

SHE wrote him only little matter-of-fact notes for the few days that followed the "giantess" episode, vaguely aware, too, that she was punishing herself for having pretended that she was giving him up when she wasn't. But the result was much the same with them. What was the matter? Had she made any queer decision about which she wasn't telling him?

"Just trying to be polite," she told him.

"Oh!" he said, half convinced.

"It does look almost impossible, doesn't it?" she said a little forlornly.

"Either is impossible," he told her finally. "Both politeness and conventionality have had their day."

"Then I suppose we ought to call it the end," she ventured in a choked little voice.

"Never," he said.

"I'm serious," she said, after a pause.

"You can't end anything over a telephone," he remonstrated.

"It ought to be a good way," she said.

Sudden fear took hold of him. You could never predict her actions!

"You can't mean that, Nan," he said. He could not bear to lose her now. Perhaps her feeling for religion had finally won the strength which her letters had betrayed.

"But I think I do," she returned in a little stronger tone.

"I couldn't bear it that way," he said abruptly.

"If it's the only way I can?" she asked.

"Not without seeing you," he said.

"But, Forr—" she began.

And then she realized that they had been cut off. Yes; only the irritating buzz of the instrument sounded in her ear. Had he cut off? Or—or——

"Central," she called, "you cut us off——"

"Number, please," droned central.

"Oh dear!" she cried in exasperation. Well, he would call her again, of course, she thought to herself in the tiny bedroom a little later. She was glad he had called. She wished she were seeing him. She had stood it as long as she could without seeing him, despite the Bible and the letters.

She waited, with a curious feeling of pique, as the afternoon wore on and he did not appear or call up, and she sat before the fire, trying to read, her mind busy with anticipation and memory. It was really rather curious that he did neither. He never had let anything interfere like this before. What was the idea?

She turned expectantly toward the door at that, the sound of footsteps on the stairs catching her ear. Perhaps this was he, now!

It was David, however, she saw an instant later, shaking the snow from his shoes and unbuttoning his huge fur coat.

"Oh, hello!" she said uncertainly.

"Hello, Nan!" he said in an odd tone. He went across the room and hung his coat across the grandfather rocker. "Going to a tea?"

"Why, no," she said, glancing down at her black-taffeta dress.

"I thought you looked a little fancier than usual," he said absently.

"You haven't seen me afternoons lately," she replied softly. There seemed to be almost tiny streaks of gray in David's hair when the light caught it in a certain way. "What's up?"

He came forward, blowing on his glasses and polishing them, and then putting them away as he took up his position before the dull fire.

"Why, they've struck," he said comprehensively.

"Who?" she inquired.

"The clothing workers."

"Did Mr. Fechter order them out?"

"They went," he explained briefly.

Like a sudden streak of lightning, that strike, he told her—coming suddenly out of the lowering clouds—beginning in that little shop of Massoni's with its sixteen workers, spreading down to Rosenberg's and Zalinsky's and Wile's, gathering strength and numbers as it swept down Allen Street, and the gesticulating crowds stood on the cobblestones, and the windows of buildings became crowded, thinned and emptied, and shop after shop, loft after loft, factory after factory disgorged its workers, and the conflict was on—pickets, committees, parades and all!

The sounds of tramping feet, the confused cries of many tongues penetrated the living-room's quiet of an instant, and Nancy sprang to her feet.

"Perhaps they're coming past here!" she exclaimed.

"They are," David announced from the window. "It's the Kerrigan Street local."

"But what do they want?" Nancy asked, her hands clasped.

"Recognition of the union, mostly," David told her.

"Oh!" she said. It seemed such a curious demand to her.

Some sudden premonition seemed to come to her with the thought, nevertheless.

"Do you suppose this will upset father's plans?" she asked.

"Perhaps," said David inscrutably.

Something in his tone alarmed her. The telephone-bell rang and she went to answer it hurriedly. Perhaps this was why Forrester had not called her again; perhaps this was what had happened to prevent him from coming down. Perhaps her father had called him because of the danger of the floating of United Clothing that any extended strike would present. People were not investing in new companies that started out with labor troubles. She knew that. Only big corporations that had the open shop could succeed, too, she remembered Forrester saying time and again.

Did this mean that United might be postponed—and Christmas cease to be her reprieve? Unless they could settle the strike at once——

Fear of that possibility struck her a little cold as she took off the receiver. It was Forrester's voice, she recognized at once.

"Hello!" she said.

"I can't come down this afternoon—just now, Nan," she heard him over the wire. "This confounded strike—perhaps you know——"

"Yes," she said.

"I can't help it, of course. You understand, don't you?"

"Quite, I think," she said.

"We can talk to-morrow at lunch at the Georgian. I can make that, I am sure."

"Perfectly satisfactory," she said.

She closed off almost mechanically. So it was true. That was what had kept him from coming—and might keep him from going to New York after Christmas.

"It was just Forrester," she told David, as she came back to the window.

But she did not see a single figure of the rest of that silent, shuffling parade.

SHE met him at the Georgian promptly the next noon, a tiny doubt in her mind whether he would be able to come at the last minute or would send his regrets by a messenger. No simple strike of just the Kerrigan Street local, this conflict, she had realized as she had read the morning paper for the first time in weeks. It involved all the clothing trade in the city, and might bring in Chicago and New York. A drive on the unions and fair wages, so Anton Fechter characterized it—brought by the employers association's unfair practises in disregarding the protocol's arbitration laws so that the workers had to strike now or go under for good.

"All a damn lie," Forrester told her in the Georgian. "It's their next step toward taking over industry. They only want wages as part of the campaign to oust capital. They're out for revolution. That's what they contemplate. With capital in the place labor has now!"

"Can they win?"

"Not a chance," said Stone pugnaciously. "We'll give them all the strike they want. We can stand it better than they can. They'll be crawling back for their jobs, one by one, as it hits their pocketbooks and their stomachs."

"I thought of United at once," she said.

"We'll defer that."

"Long?"

The anxiety in her voice escaped him.

"Till the strike is broken. We might as well. We've got to start it right. If the Amalgamated holds us by the throat from the beginning, common stock won't ever touch fifty."

"That's what I thought," she said.

"We'll stand flat against any dealing with any union or organization of any kind. We'll rouse public opinion against them until the cows come home."

"I see," she said slowly.

And yet all she was seeing, as she sat there and the orchestra in the Pompeian room to the right began playing, was what it would mean for her. Yes; it might mean life or death for these workers and success or failure for United Clothing. But it would mean them for her, too. Forrester would be here for months longer now. Even if David suspected nothing, Fate would not decide for her. She would have to fight for herself. That was what it meant for her. Afterward, indeed, I think she realized that that had been almost her sole view of the strike which shook Clewesbury to its foundations.

AND yet she realized dimly what David was doing and why, even at the time. No one could misunderstand that who heard him speak at the Consumers' League uptown, who saw the crowds of shivering, wan children hanging their heels on the curb before the Brotherhood House, wrapped in old shawls or long, ragged trousers, the drab of the scene only lightened by an occasional streak of emerald green or velvet red where some old coverlet made its final appearance as a coat on some rickety boy or girl.

No intimidation or influence at the Brotherhood House! Fair play there for American childhood, no matter what industrial struggle was going on!

Who would give fifty dollars for some other woman's child?

That was David's speech at the Pontiac, she always remembered, his hands trembling a little, and perspiration on his big forehead over the effort of speaking. He, who could never speak without self-consciousness! Yes; it was very plain what he was trying to do. But it did not solve her problem in the least.

She thought of little else during all those late weeks of the winter while the fate of Europe trembled in the balance and step by step America approached the gates of war, although the echo sounded but faintly in Clewesbury.

She did not know, of course, of those meetings in the pottery-filled library and the daffodil-touched office in the Van Wyck Building where the beautifully engraved stock-certificates of United Clothing lay piled in neat rows in the cabinet-case, and the arguments rose higher and higher as the weeks lengthened and the strike remained unbroken. Nor did she know of those uncomfortable moments when Jonathan Edmunds and Van Wyck faced Dr. Musson in the rectory study on Congress Avenue and the old man went over the activities of the Brotherhood House one by one until he came to the Children's Fund and silence fell—and he cursed roundly and comprehensively the day A. J. Van Wyck's son-in-law had ever been born. Not for nothing had Edmunds' father been a stable-hostler.

I doubt, too, if she ever saw any of those meetings night after night in the halls of South Clewesbury when Anton Fechter held his forces together and the number of relief-tickets mounted steadily from a hundred to a thousand, to five thousand, and the committee on benefits ceased doling out money and bought ton after ton of supplies and rationed them out in the strikers' stores.

And yet she felt instinctively the approach of a crisis as outside the Brotherhood House the storm rose, and in it her own drama mounted steadily. She had married a man, anyhow!

She knew that the day she stood in the little wrought-iron balcony of the Chamber of Commerce Building and heard David ask for arbitration while the crowd at luncheon hissed and pounded the tables and he went a little white and then held high in his arms the Italian child he had brought with him. And the assemblage quieted like a theatre audience when the curtain goes up. No Kenny Watson or Breck Addams was facing the Chamber of Commerce, she noticed, with a curious catch in her throat—just slow, big-hearted David. How he caught at your feelings once in a while! How could any one ever kill forever that heart of his?

That was what she was asking herself in the dusk of the April afternoons as she stared in the mirror and noticed, with a tiny start, how pale she was becoming—and what circles she had beneath her eyes. An impossible existence to go through with! She could feel herself and Forrester sinking deeper into the dulness and dishonor of an "understanding" every day. Soon they would have no fineness or character left unless she did something abrupt, sharp, irrevocable.

Will Nan be able to extricate herself? The concluding instalment of "A Flash of Gold" will appear in September EVERYBODY'S—out August 15th.

The Wonder City

Maeterlinck and Fabre Have Written Drama about Various Insects That We Consider Inconsequential. St. Mars Has Now Written a Tragedy of the Wasp Family

By F. St. Mars

"THERE goes a wasp! Kill it!"

Vespa was very suddenly aware of whirlwinds all about her in the air—of handkerchiefs and papers whirling everywhere.

She tried to give warning and explain, by her rising hum, who she was and that she could be dangerous. But it was all no good. She had to go.

The direct route for her home, however, was by a shut window on the far side of the room, and to it she flew at once. She hit the window with a resounding thwack, and spent the next minute spinning like a top on her head.

Recovering therefrom, she explored that window more carefully, and, by the draft blowing in, found one pane of it broken.

Another, however, had discovered that broken diamond pane also. So it happened that the wasp—always in a hurry, of course—charging headlong out, was stopped, this time in a web.

The spider who had designed and executed that mathematically built snare was, I think, asleep, but even he could not ignore the violent vibrations of the telephone-line at his elbow with which he kept himself in touch with his web, and in a twinkling he appeared from some fastness or other at a gallop to see what he had caught.

When he beheld the wasp, he stopped short. He had only arranged to catch flies. He knew to an estimated fraction how much tension his snare-ropes were designed to stand, but he seemed to doubt if the wasp knew. Moreover, she might break out if he did not quickly rope her up. But to do this he must approach close to that corseleted she fiend gleaming there in the sunshine, and he doubted if he dare. Finally he took his courage in all his eight legs and chanced it.

The wasp did not move as, cautiously as a cat stalking a bird, the spider approached, leg by leg, along his aerial ways. And *that* should have warned him. It did not, however. He got within reach and arranged his ropes. Then the wasp jumped.

The rest was a confused buzz, a mix-up of vibrating bodies, and—well, there was the wasp serenely flying off, web and all, and spider and all, to her nest beside the tree-trunk over the garden wall.

Here we overtake our wasp—spider and all—flying down to a hole. There was nothing to show that this hole in the bank of the hedge was not an ordinary mouse-hole—in fact, it had been at one time—save that a little heap of stones, beginning at about two inches from the mouth of the hole, was scattered round it in a semicircle about two feet in circumference. All these little stones were about the same size.

Our wasp—whose name, by the bye, as we have said, was Vespa—immediately dived into the hole, almost perpendicularly, along a narrow earth tunnel, smooth and polished with the passage of thousands upon thousands of hurrying feet. She passed on the way many wasps coming out.

Vespa traveled downward through the growing dark much farther than you would have expected till, at last, the tunnel took a horizontal curve and one wall became the floor and the other, on the right hand—or right-wing one, I should say—became the roof. Then the latter stopped and gave place to a cavity; then another, and higher, roof, which was no longer of earth but of wood-pulp paper, and was, in fact, the lower outer wall of the wasps' nest hanging in the wasps' city.

Above her now, in this paper roof of the passage, Vespa soon saw the city gate, even though it was pitch-dark.

Flying up into this entrance, and passing through a narrow hot-air space, Vespa entered a second gate, crossed another hot-air space and passed, but did not stop at, a big tier, or platform, of paper cells. All these cells hung head downward, and the floor was the ceiling, and the wasps, working here and there upon the same, used the ceiling as the floor, with their heads hung down into space. These were very large cells, too—royal cells, in fact—and although the outer ones were open, showing the royal egg within, the center ones were covered over and capped with spun silk—the work of the royal grub inside when she had turned into a chrysalis just preparatory to emerging as a real wasp princess and a future queen.

The tier hung by stalks of paper—wasp-paper, made of wood-pulp, you know—from the next, which was larger. Here were wasps in thousands—the nurses, the guards, the food-providers, the slaves and the main population of the city, without whom the city would perish, by whose will it had become a city at all, in fact. In short, though no one could take a precise census of that city and live, it may be accepted that the population of the wasp people was not short of fifty thousand all told, and its cell-capacity about eleven thousand.

AT THE fifth tier, or comb, of cells, Vespa stopped and began to crawl along till she came to a fat white grub like dozens of others, hanging head downward from a hook in her tail, hitched onto her own long-since empty egg-shell. This grub was, like all the rest, apparently afflicted with an appetite, and to her Vespa fed her spider.

This process took some time, and then Vespa climbed up to the next, or sixth, tier of cells. This was still smaller than the last, and very quiet. Indeed, save for a few workers at business with some capped cells round the outside, the whole floor was practically empty, for the center cells had been used three times over—reared three wasps in the single summer, that is.

These cells were some of the oldest in the city. The place already smelled of decay, in spite of the wasps' well-known cleanliness; and it was here one caught one's first sight of the wasps' inspector of nuisances—to wit, the fat grub of Mr. Volucella Inanis, crawling from empty cell to empty cell in execution of his duty of cleaning them out.

Vespa prowled round this tier for a bit, as though it were part of her particular duty to overlook these old workings, and then finally climbed to the seventh, which was at once the smallest and last tier, or comb, of all. In fact, it was really the first, for from that one tier, built by the queen mother in the days when she was not yet a queen, had all the rest sprung.

This tier was absolutely silent; only the ceaseless hum of the city throbbed below, as the purring of the turbines sounds deep down in a great liner. Nothing seemed to be alive there except the aforesaid grubs of Volucella. And Vespa had only proceeded along it a little way before her path was completely barred by built-up paper barriers. The center of the tier had been completely closed up, perhaps because the wasps considered the old building unsafe, or perhaps because they, with their shrewd knowledge of hygiene, feared the risk of dirt, death and decay, as all good citizens should.

Our Vespa was now, as it were, at the heart of things. Above her, somewhere behind those barricades, was the root in the earth upon which the whole city was hung.

Vespa was tapping lightly here and there with her antennæ—as a wheel-tester taps the wheels of railway cars—when suddenly she noticed a change in the temperature. And she knew that a lowered temperature would kill the grubs.

Hastily Vespa examined the roof. Nothing had fallen. All was intact. But few things can lower temperature like damp—or raise it—and Vespa's marvelous magic wands of antennæ detected damp.

By this time she had been joined by another wasp, quite evidently come to see what was the matter.

Vespa and her companion, after an antennæ consultation, hurried downward past the hanging streets of the city, followed by others; but they were all some time in discovering the cause of the trouble, which was percolating through the roof of the earth-cavity.

Now, Vespa's mind was essentially practical if nothing else, and her instant decision seemed to be voted unanimously and simultaneously correct—namely, to thicken the roof. They must plaster more paper on it.

Again Vespa hurried away, this time to the entrance-tunnel, a mixed gathering of alarmed workers hard on her heels. But at the first city gate they were stopped. It was raining outside—one of those sudden, almost tropical downpours of late summer had burst over the landscape, and the wasps were held up. Damp they feared in the city, but under no consideration would they venture forth in the rain. They stood disconsolate just within the tunnel, then fell back to the city. Rain they could not or would not dare.

VESPA was the first to leave the city when at last the rain held up and the sun was turned on in floods of gold.

She hurried to the summer-house.

Twenty other workers followed hard upon her humming course. And soon the steady scrape, scrape, scrape of their united jaws upon the wood could be heard inside as plainly as if a mouse were gnawing there. Each wasp, when she had finished, had her mouth full of filed wood, which she would masticate until it became pure wood-pulp paper.

Soon Vespa returned at the head of the small procession of builders, loaded down with wood paper, which, to wasps, is almost the main safeguard of life. But some, Vespa among them, brought death as well as life.

Looking carefully—if one dared—upon Vespa's back as she flew, one would have discovered, riding her as craftily as ever a jockey rode, a horrible tiny insect-shape, shrimplike, if like anything, and sinister. This wicked-looking atom had jumped upon the wasp's back while she was scraping wood—in fact, had waited upon the wood for that purpose. Once there, the wasp could not get it off again, noticed or not. And several of the other wasps bore those mysterious minute riders, too. And they were the very seeds of death, and Triungulin, or Paradoxus, was their name.

Vespa hurried to the city and began to thatch the roof with her quota of paper. On either side of her, other worker-wasps thatched, too—busy, unheeding, perhaps unthinking. And the tiny insects that had gained entrance to the city in this cunning fashion jumped off again and crept carefully into the upper combs of the city itself. They were the larvæ—the first stage, that is—of a certain kind of beetle, and they were going to feed upon the very wasp-grubs in their own cells, unseen and deadly, until they themselves became beetles in the end.

Vespa was too busy and worried to trouble about her tiny enemies, though. Greater threatened. Summer heat had cracked the earth; the rain had found those cracks and loosened the earth. Particles had fallen upon the city roof; these must be cleared away. Earth, 'tis true, could be broken up—and was—and carried away, far out of the hole in the hedge-bank, by relays of Vespa's busy companions. But stones of flint and chalk were another matter. At any cost, the roof must be cleared of dirt.

Vespa picked up one little flint stone and staggered off with it to toward the entrance of the city. It weighed just thirty-five hundreths of a gram and the weight of her that carried it was some seventy-six thousandths of a gram; so that Vespa was actually carrying a burden weighing four times as much as herself. But she got along with it. Arrived at the mouth of the mouse-hole, however, an insurmountable difficulty confronted her. When Vespa started to fly, she found that her burden represented the limit of her lift—as they say in flying-parlance—and she got no further than four inches before she pitched on her nose and buzzed. And that, you will note, explained the circle of little stones about the same size disposed round the gates of the city.

Vespa returned, this time inside the city itself, to the top comb, and found that the damp had already created alarm there. Many workers were busy; the top tier had been completely abandoned and was being barricaded with many wrappings of paper.

This labor had, however, taken many off their legitimate work as provisioners, and Vespa was met every way she faced by a clamorous, though silent, demand for food from the hanging, helpless, legless wasp-grubs. For which reason she turned about at once and fled out again.

Vespa visited the house and picked a

house-fly off the window, absolutely without hurry or pursuit, just as we should pick a fork from the table. Then she winged, or "pinged," back to the wasp-city, cut off the fly's head and legs and fed the carcass to the first grub she came to.

Vespa then once more hurried off. A bad shortage of food was now noticeable in the city, and supplies were by no means coming as they should to keep the grubs alive. She must return to the house.

But there Vespa received a bad reception. Indeed, she was well-nigh slain by a slipper, besides being mobbed by the flies, and left that room in disgust, only to come to another, cool, silent and enticing, the door of which was a few inches open. And here it was that Vespa discovered the honey-pot.

This matter sounds small, but was really of importance. After taking only about a minute to obtain a full load of honey, Vespa did not eat, but flew off to the wasp-city with it. She returned again quickly, and repeated the process continually throughout the livelong day.

Then calamity descended upon that city of fifty thousand—the calamity of internal decay, that was foretold by the Volucella grubs, the damp and the beetle-larvæ.

The night that followed was remarkable for a very sharp frost, and when the sun rose next dawning, though wasps are hardier and earlier abroad than ants or bees, few besides Vespa dared go out before an hour or two; and when they did, there was little or no insect-prey left to feed the young wasps upon—and famine smote hard.

Thus, then, it happened that Vespa, returning with a load of honey at noon, met a grim and silent procession pouring out of the city gates. It consisted of worker-wasps by the hundred; and each wasp carried a still white burden, and each burden was a wasp baby, killed—stung to death, 'twas said—by order of the state, on the principle, apparently, that sudden death is better than slow starvation. And each worker, as she got outside, took wing with the lifeless burden to a certain spot in the field beyond, where she dropped it.

But worse was to follow.

Vespa waited to let the procession by, and then hurried into the tunnel, only to be swept back by a jostling crowd of drones. She pushed her way past these and entered the city. Everybody was loafing. No busy hum met her. The empty cells gaped at her like eye-sockets in a skull. The grubs of Volucella, the fly, were crawling everywhere, scavenging. Already the beetles, that were Triungulins grown up, crawled about openly.

Vespa hurried from tier to tier, going gradually upward, as if she were looking for something. She was. But it was not till she reached the top tier of all that she found that for which she sought.

Back at the very heart of things, returned at last to the very ruined remnants of the cells which in the beginning she, when founding the city, had made with her own fine paper—finer than any workers'—jammed against a toppling barricade, the queen of the city had come in the end; and there, already at the point of death, Vespa found her.

In vain the faithful little worker offered her honey of the best, in vain caressed her, in vain cleaned and washed her. The royal head was already dead, dead to the wings and limbs. Only the sting moved at the last, just to show that the royal mistress was grateful. Then that, too, curled up, and all was still. The queen was dead!

Vespa became greatly agitated. She hurried down through the city from tier to tier, buzzing, almost screaming, loudly.

And, somehow, then the word passed.

A hum began, growing louder and louder and louder till it filled the whole city. Every wasp seemed to be rushing about. The queen mother was dead! No more eggs to hatch. No more grubs to rear. No more work. Nothing was left to live for.

The wasps poured forth from the abandoned city, and a host of lesser insects that had feared the yellow workers' stern law and order rushed in to glean what pickings they could.

THAT evening, in a bitter wind, just in that last faint afterglow of day that runs immediately before the true dark, I came upon a wasp worker, flying—quite silently and all alone—from the direction of the back door. And even as I looked, the cold paralyzed her, and she fell at my feet—dead. It was Vespa—Vespa, full of honey. I wonder what she thought she was going to do with it—that poor lonely one, working still when there was nothing left to work for.

An Old-Time Stirring Sea Tale—
A Reminder of Jack London

The Blood-Ship

The Black Villainy of Yankee Swope's Game Brings Affairs on the Blood-Ship to a Thrilling Climax, and Jack Shreve Takes the Final Step of His Evolution into Manhood

By Norman Springer

Illustration by Henry Pitz

Begin this story with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

MAYBE you'll think that's a strange thing for me to tell you—that I, John Shreve, master, once took a gun from a bloody mutineer and told him I was going aft to kill my captain. But consider the dilemma!

Look what had happened since I, a nineteen-year-old barbarian, had shipped aboard the *Golden Bough* from the Knitting Swede's. My one friend was Newman, that man of mystery who'd led me to ship when not another man on all the waterfront would look at articles to follow him, who was lured by the tale that Yankee Swope's wife was aboard. Twice he'd saved my life—once when Swope himself had tried to whip us both off a yard-arm.

Through all the hell of that ship, I'd gone on thinking more and more of him every day. I knew he had broken jail—and knew, without his telling me, that he was innocent—knew, indeed, that Swope's lies had sent him there, and that that was why Swope had reeled back in terror when he'd seen him and tried, later, to kill him. There was a boy's hero-worship in what I thought of Newman, whatever his right name might be.

He'd made me see the black villainy of Swope's game. Here were Blackie and Boston, who'd broken jail with him—and shipped aboard the *Golden Bough* to have a chance at the gold in her lazaret. They'd planned mutiny from the start. And Newman had made me see at last that Swope wanted it, too, wanted it to have an excuse for killing—killing Newman and his own wife. They held a secret, between them, that would hang him. That was why Swope had let poor Nils, the little squarehead, die without help, after the beatings he and Fitzgibbon, the mate, had given him.

But Newman had kept the crew quiet then—he and Holy Joe between them—Holy Joe. a shanghaied parson, matching his knowledge that he was right against a bucko mate and winning through—once. But now Newman was in irons, and I'd heard Swope building up a case against his wife—*and* Newman. Lynch, the second mate, had argued as far as he could. But he hadn't been able to save Newman, and he hadn't been able to keep them from beating up Holy Joe and me. Aye; remember the beating they'd given me—and the way I'd taken it without fighting back, because Newman had told me I mustn't lose my temper.

With Newman gone, it was all up to me—

I was cock of my watch. But those men were crazed with fear. They had to get Swope before he got them—it was so they reasoned.

I was in earnest. I meant to do the murder. Aye; "murder" is what the law of man would call it, and "murder" is the right term. I planned the deed, not in cold blood, perhaps, but certainly with coolness and foresight. I intended to creep aft in the night and shoot down the captain.

Consider my dilemma!

Newman was my friend—aye; more than that, he was in my youthful eyes a demigod, a man to revere and worship above all others. He was prisoner, helpless. The crew were bent on mutiny; I could not stop them. The mutiny was planned and expected by the captain, and its outbreak would be the needed excuse for the slaying of Newman and, Newman said, of the lady.

How could I save Newman? That was my problem. How, indeed? The evil choice was inevitably mine, and I considered it the lesser evil. If I killed Swope, Newman would be safe. Perhaps the mutiny would collapse, would never come off. This last was something I thought Boston and Blackie, blinded by their greed, would overlook. But I knew it was hate and fear of Swope, rather than greed, that impelled the squareheads to revolt. If Swope were killed, they might not go on with it, and what the sailors decided the stiffs must agree to. And in any case Newman would be safe.

I did not approach the job in a spirit of revulsion and horror. I planned Yankee Swope's murder in a spirit of self-sacrifice. Aye; truly I did! I dare say few acts in my life have had a finer, cleaner, less selfish motive.

I did not expect to escape after firing the shot. I expected the mates or the tradesmen would kill me. True, I thought of hiding on the dark deck and picking off the captain when he appeared on the poop. That is what Boston and Blackie thought I intended doing. But it was uncertain, and I meant to make sure of the brute. Besides, it was, I felt, cowardly. I intended to get into the cabin and shoot Swope in his own armchair, so to speak. Afterward—well, they could do what they pleased with me. My friend would be safe.

So I lived through a few very exalted hours before the first night watch came. Unhappy? Not I. In moments I touched the skies in exaltation.

For I was the sacrifice. I was the center of the drama. I was Fate. Oh, but I was a romantic-minded young ass, and the situation flattered my generous conceit. I was dying for my friend's sake. My imagination gave my death nobility. I imagined Newman and the lady remembering me sadly all their lives. I imagined my name on sailors' lips; they would talk of me, of Jack Shreve, the lad who killed Yankee Swope so his shipmate might live.

MY RESOLUTION did not weaken; rather, it grew firmer with the passage of the hours. Of course I did not take the crew into my confidence (there might be, I thought, another Cockney among them), but I laid down the law to Boston and Blackie, and those two worthies promised faithfully to obey my injunctions. They promised they would keep the men in check until I had completed my task. They promised also to mislead the spy, and see that no man laid violent hands upon him.

This last I considered important. The crowd was eager for vengeance upon Cockney. He had committed the unpardonable sin; he had betrayed his mates. Blackie wanted to slit his throat and drop him over the side; and the men voted an emphatic "aye" to the suggestion. Sentence would have been executed as soon as Cockney came forward from the wheel had I not interposed my veto and given my reasons.

It was not solicitude for the spy's life that influenced me. I, too, considered he had forfeited his right to life by his act. But I pointed out that offering immediate violence to Cockney might alarm the afterguard and change their plan of action.

So when Cockney breezed into the fo'c's'le at four bells, his reception in no way roused his suspicions. Everything seemed going his way. He sympathized volubly with me, and would have wakened Holy Joe, who had dropped into a healing sleep after regaining consciousness, to sympathize with him, had I permitted. Aye; he was a good dissembler, was Cockney—but we matched him. His mouth dripped curses on Swope and his minions; he exhorted us to " 'arve guts" and rush the poop at muster-time; he was willing to risk his own skin by leading the rush. "Wot did we think abaht it?"

Boston told him we thought early evening a bad time for the adventure. We were going to wait until morning, just before dawn. That was the hour in which to strike. The mutiny was timed for four o'clock.

"Hi cawn't 'ardly wyte that long, Hi'm that eager to get my knife 'twixt that myte's bleedin' ribs," said Cockney.

The nigger had come in during the discussion. He seated himself, and recommenced his favorite task of stropping his knife upon a whetstone. At the cockney's last words, he lifted his head.

"Doan' yoh touch de mate," he said to Cockney. "Dat man's mah meat."

Cockney disputed this. He raved, and swore, and even threatened Nigger. Aye; he made a fine bluster. 'E wasn't goin' to give hup 'is chawnce at the bleedin' myte—not 'im! The nigger could 'arve the bloomin' second myte—that's wot."

Nigger was so incensed he got up and left, leaving the last word to the spy. Nigger had brooded so much over his wrongs he was a bit cracked; he took no part in the councils of the crew, and did not know, I am sure, that Cockney had been unmasked as a traitor. Else he would never have acted as he later did.

It came down night. It was a good night for my purpose, dark and shadowless, with a mere sliver of a new moon in the sky.

After the eight-o'-clock muster, when my watch was sent below, I slipped round the corner of the roundhouse, where the tradesmen lived, and crouched there in the darkness while my mates trooped forward. This roundhouse—which was really square, of course, like most roundhouses on board ship—was very plentifully supplied with ports. Designedly so, no doubt, for it was the cabin's outpost. There were four port-holes in its forward wall, commanding the fore deck, and three in the side walls. The door of the house was in the after wall. It was built like a fort, and used as one.

As I lay there on the deck, pressed against the forward wall, I saw the muzzles of shotguns sticking out of the port-holes above my head. There was no light showing in the roundhouse, but the tradesmen were in there just the same. Aye; and prepared and alert.

Oh, Swope was canny—as canny as he was cruel. He would provoke mutiny, but he would run no chance of losing his ship or his life. What could a few revolvers do against these entrenched men? My shipmates' revolt could have but one end—mass-murder and defeat! As Swope planned.

SO I thought, as I lay there on the deck, watching my chance to slip aft. Swope's plan, Swope's mutiny, I thought. Swope was the soul of the whole vile business. His plan—and I was going to spoil it! I was going to put a bullet in his black heart.

I might have picked him off at that very moment if I aimed carefully. For, as my mates' footsteps died away forward, I edged round the corner of the roundhouse and saw the enemy standing on the poop. The three of them were there—the two mates, with the skipper standing between them.

"The rats have discovered some courage—but they'll lose it soon enough when they face our reception," I heard him say. "But—no nodding to-night, misters! Keep your eyes and ears open."

Fitzgibbon mumbled something. The captain laughed—his soft, tinkling laugh.

"I'm going down to take a look at him now," he said, and the three of them moved aft, out of sight.

Aye; I might have picked him off then. But I didn't even entertain the thought. It was no part of my plan to slay from concealment. I meant to face the brute in his own lighted cabin.

The door of the roundhouse was closed, so I need not fear the inmates would observe me entering the cabin. The break of the poop seemed clear of life. I scuttled on my hands and knees until I was past the booby-hatch; then I rose to my feet and flitted noiselessly to the cabin door. I opened it just wide enough to admit my body, and stepped into the lighted cabin alleyway.

My bare feet made no noise as I crept toward the saloon. This was the first time I had set foot within the sacred precincts of the quarter-deck. But from the gossip of those who had been aft, to sick-call or to work, I had a fairly clear mental picture of the cabin's interior.

There were three doors opening upon the alleyway. The one on the port side led to the sail-locker, I knew; the two on the starboard side were the doors to the mate's rooms. The mates were on deck; so I need not fear these doors.

At the entrance to the saloon I paused and looked round for a hiding-place before I entered. I could not stay in the alleyway and wait for Captain Swope, for any instant one of the tradesmen might come in behind me.

The captain's quarters were on the starboard side of the saloon. On the port side were the lady's quarters, the pantry and the room occupied by the steward and cabin-boy. A rattle of dishes came from the pantry, and I supposed the two Chinese were busy in there.

Suddenly I drew back, almost discovered. The door of the steward's room—the forward door on the port side—opened, and Wong stepped out. If he had glanced toward the alleyway, he would surely have seen me. But his whole attention was directed elsewhere. Swope's voice sounded at the head of the companion-ladder. Wong immediately ran aft to the door of the lady's room, locked the door with a key he took from his pocket and then disappeared into the pantry. I did not hesitate an instant. Wong's room would be a good place in which to hide and from which to step forth and confront the captain when the opportune moment came. I crossed the corner of the saloon in a bound and sought the shelter of the Chinaman's room.

I opened the door and stepped in backward. My alert eyes assured me I was unseen. I softly closed the door—all save a crack, through which I meant to watch for the coming of my victim.

I heard a gasp behind me. I shut the door tight and wheeled round—and found myself staring into the startled face of the lady.

SHE was on her knees on the floor, almost at my very feet. I thought at first I had made a mistake about the doors, and this was her room. But a glance about told me otherwise.

There was a lamp burning in gimbals, and, though shaded, it cast sufficient light to illumine the mean interior. It was no woman's room. It was a mere cubby-hole, containing two bunks, and it smelled of Chinese occupancy; and, moreover, some of the steward's white clothes were hanging on the wall.

Yet here was the lady at my feet.

She crouched on her knees, with her skirts spread wide and her hands hidden behind her back. When I first met her eyes they were wide with startled fear, but when she recognized me, the fear gave way to relief.

"Oh, I thought—it was—" she breathed. Then she saw the revolver in my hand. The fear leaped into her eyes again—aye; and comprehension. "That—oh, boy, what do you mean to do?"

I had been gaping, open-mouthed, too surprised to utter a sound. But her swift recognition and her words brought me to myself. Also, just then we heard Captain Swope's voice. He was in the saloon, calling out an order to the steward. We listened with strained attention—both of us. He told the steward to open the lazaret hatch—and be sharp about it.

I jerked my thumb over my shoulder and nodded significantly to the lady.

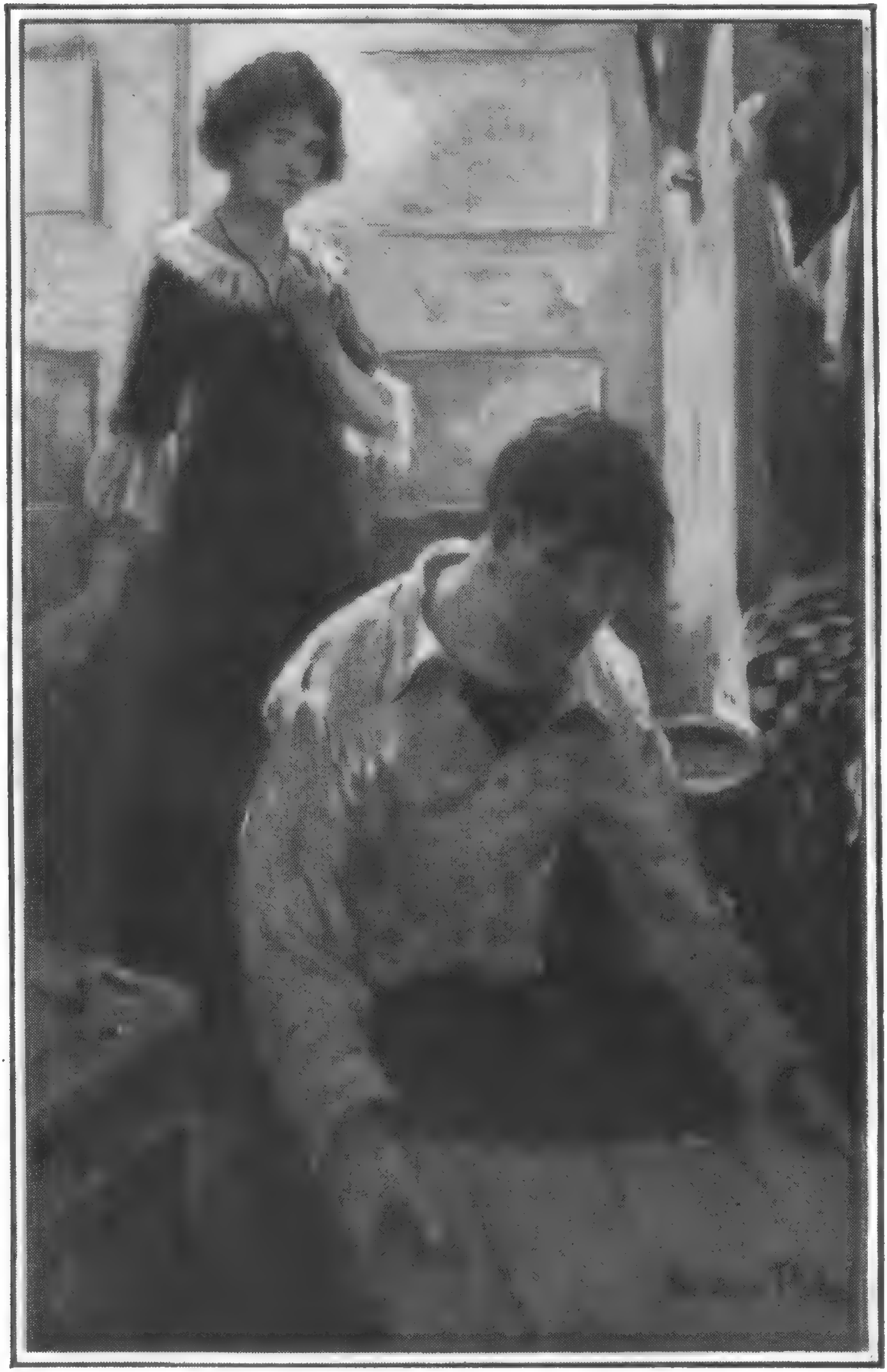
"Don't be afraid, ma'am," I whispered. "He isn't going to hurt Newman. He isn't going to hurt any one—not any more." Oh, the dread that showed in her face when we heard Swope's voice!

She brought her hands into view when I spoke. Something she had been holding behind her back dropped on the deck with a metallic clink, and she pressed her hands against her bosom.

"You—you mean—" she began.

I nodded again.

"I'm going out there and get him. Don't be afraid, ma'am—I won't make a miss of it. He isn't going to hurt Newman, or you, or any one, after I've finished. And, ma'am, please—will you try to slip for'ard and tell the men not to mutiny? They'll listen to you, especially when you tell them the old man is dead. They don't want to mutiny, ma'am—anyway, the squareheads don't, but they're afraid not to. If you tell them I've killed the brute and appeal to them, the sailors will keep quiet, I know; and they'll make the stiffs keep quiet, too. It will save some lives, ma'am—for the crowd is coming aft to-night, like the old man plans, and the tradesmen are in the roundhouse, with guns, waiting for them."



The echo of the big ship's bell for'ard had hardly died away when I carefully, ever so carefully, lifted up and laid back the cut-away section of the deck.

There was anguish in her whispered reply.

"Coming aft? No, no; they must not! O God, it means—his death!"

She stopped. We listened. We heard Swope again, out in the saloon. He was damning Wong for a sluggard, and demanding a lighted lantern that instant or sooner, or "I'll take a strip off your yellow hide, you heathen!"

"No; not Newman's death," I answered the lady. I turned and laid my hand upon the door-knob.. My weapon was ready. This was the moment I must act.

Before I could open the door, I felt the lady's cool fingers upon my wrist.

"No, no; not that! Not murder!" she exclaimed. "Oh, boy, you would not take life—you would not do that!"

I TURNED and faced her, astonished. Her eyes were but a few inches distant from mine now, and, to my amazement, I read in their expression not approbation but startled horror. And I could not mistake the meaning in her voice. She disapproved of my killing Captain Swope.

I was as shocked as she. Here I had been happy in the consciousness I was playing the hero. I had believed myself cutting a very pretty figure indeed in the lady's eyes, and, instead—well, my bubble was pricked. As I looked into those eyes, I could feel my grand dimensions dwindling in my own. More than that, I began to feel ashamed. I felt, without consciously reasoning about it, that murdering Yankee Swope would, perhaps, be not such a noble deed after all. I confronted an ethic that was superior to the barbarous moral code of my brutal world. It vanquished me. It took from me the feeling I was doing right.

But I could not surrender thus tamely.

"But, ma'am, you know I must," I said. "You know—he will kill him!"

Her little fingers were plucking at mine, which were stubbornly gripped about the revolver's stock.

"I know you must not," she answered. "You must not take human life!" It was a commandment she uttered, and I took it as such. Especially, when she added, "Do you think *he* would kill in that fashion?"

That finished me. Aye; she knew how to beat down my defense; her woman's insight had supplied her with an invincible argument. I averted my eyes from hers and hung my head; I allowed her to take the revolver from my grasp.

For I knew the answer to her question. "He" would not creep into the cabin and shoot Captain Swope. She meant Newman, and I knew that Newman would scorn to do the thing I had planned. Kill Swope in fair fight, with chances equal—aye; Newman might do that. But shoot him down like a mad dog, when he was unprepared and perhaps unarmed—no; Newman would not do that. Nor would any decent man.

I passed another mile-stone in my evolution into manhood as I stood there, hangdog and shamed.

She brushed the hair back from my forehead. Oh, there was magic in her touch! That gentle stroke restored my self-respect, my pride. It was a gesture of complete understanding. As I felt the first time I saw the lady, so I felt now—like a little boy confronting an all-wise, all-merciful mother. She understood and forgave; she knew my heart was true, my motive clean.

"You did not understand," she said, "but now you know that this"—she held up the weapon—"is not the way, is never the way. Look at me, boy—promise me you will never again attempt such an act, or even consider it."

I looked at her and promised.

But if I did not kill Swope, what would happen to Newman? That was the question that began to hammer against my mind. I felt that all was lost.

"But—we must do something, ma'am," I said miserably. "You know what will happen when the hands come aft. It will be the skipper's excuse. Newman told me it would. I can't see that happen without doing something to prevent it. Why—Newman's my friend!"

"He is my life," said the lady. Her voice was so low and passion-filled I barely caught the words. "Yet I would rather he died than lived at the cost of murder." She swayed and clutched at the foot of a bunk. But she was not the swooning kind. Not the lady. She recovered herself instantly.

"There must be no fighting. The men

must not come aft," said she. "If they do, it will ruin everything. Boy, you must stop them. Deaken will help you."

I shook my head.

"It's too late," I informed her. "They will not listen to the parson or to me; they are too afraid."

"But they must be stopped!" she cried.

"Only one man can stop them—and that's Newman himself," I replied.

"What time have they set?" she asked.

"Next eight bells," I told her. "We gave the skipper's spy to understand it was timed for four o'clock in the morning; but the lads really mean to make the rush at midnight."

"Then we have time," was her verdict. "And you must help me."

She pointed to the deck at her feet. My eyes followed her gesture, and for the first time I examined the floor of the room. The first thing my gaze encountered was a large carpenter's auger, or brace and bit; the next thing I saw was a pattern of holes in the floor. There were two rows of them, parallel, each about eighteen inches long and the same distance apart. The holes overlapped each other and made a continuous cut in the deck.

The lady thrust out her hands, palms up, for my inspection. Upon each palm was a great red blister.

"I was nearly despairing," said she. "I could no longer bear down hard enough. But now——"

But she did not need to continue or explain. I was already on my knees with the tool in my hand. I began to work with a song in my heart and the strength of Hercules in my arms. The dismal clouds of foreboding rolled away to the horizon; the immediate future shone rosy-bright. There was, it seemed, a chance to save my friend, and without bloodshed—a chance that depended in part upon my haste and strength.

While I worked, the lady by turns listened at the door and knelt by my side, pouring into my ears without reserve the explanation of my task and the plot that was behind it.

I was boring my way to Newman. That was the meaning of the two rows of holes in the deck. My task was to connect these two rows with two other rows; and when I was finished there would be an opening some eighteen inches square in the deck. And below lay Newman.

There was a scheme afoot to free Newman and the lady, to free them completely of the skipper and the ship. Lynch was in the plot—aye; this hard, savage bucko was the prime mover of the attempt. One of the tradesmen, Connelly, was friendly; he had brought the lady the tools I was using to cut through the deck. Wong, the steward, who was the lady's devoted slave, played an important part.

The plan was, said the lady, to get Newman out of the lazaret—she called him "Roy" when she spoke of him—through this hole we were making. She had the key that would release him from irons; Wong had stolen it from the skipper's desk.

When he was out of the lazaret, Lynch would take charge of the situation. The ship's long-boat, in the port after skids, was already provisioned with stores the steward had smuggled out of the cabin. The plan was, said the lady, to launch this boat at night, in the second mate's watch, and she and Newman would sail away together.

IT WAS no haphazard plot, hastily concocted after Newman's arrest. Newman knew all about it. Wong had been provisioning the craft by stealth for a week. Days ago, the second mate had overhauled the launching-gear, and made sure the falls and davits were in perfect working order.

The captain's blow, that afternoon, had jeopardized the scheme—naturally; for Newman was in the black hole, in irons. The uprising of the crew would utterly ruin the chance that still existed of the scheme's success. We must get Newman out of the lazaret before the sailors' attack occurred; we must get him forward, if possible, so he might squelch the mutiny ere it began. Aye; Newman could tame Blackie and Boston, and bring peace to the squareheads' troubled minds—I had no doubt of that. Oh, the lady knew Newman's danger, as well as I, as well as Newman himself. So she urged me to haste.

She had no need to urge; I worked like a fiend. It was hard work. The deck planking was three inches thick, and of hard wood, and I must bore a seemingly endless number of holes. I was surprised at the work accomplished before I arrived on the scene; it did not seem possible that this slender woman had driven all the holes. Nor had she. Wong had bored most of them, she said, and Connelly had worked for a while, when he had the chance to do so unobserved; but she had driven some, as the condition of her hands bore testimony. My advent was really providential—though, until I brought news of the crew's intention, she had not thought haste so essential. She could never have finished the job herself in time.

I longed mightily for a saw—yet I knew I could not have used a saw even had I obtained one. A saw makes a carrying noise. Connelly brought the boring tool aft because it was nearly noiseless.

I sweated, and wondered, and whenever I whispered a question, my companion made frank answer. I wondered about Lynch's motive. It did not seem possible that this hard-case bucko really sympathized with the hands against their oppressors. Why, he was one of the oppressors!

He did not sympathize with, or even think about the hands, the lady explained. That was one reason she was terrified at the thought of mutiny. Lynch would make common cause with the rest of the afterguard against any uprising for'ard. He was helping her and Newman from an entirely different motive. He didn't think of Newman as a fo'c's'le hand, for he knew Newman was something different, something more. Just what Lynch knew about Newman she did not say—nor did I ask.

"I have sailed three voyages with Lynch," she said. "He is a cruel man, a hard man—I have seen him do terrible things to sailors—but he is also, according to his own lights, a very just man. His cruelties are always for what he considers the ship's welfare and safety, never for any other reason, never for any personal reason. You know how he has treated you and Roy and the other men who do their work."

"Fair enough," I admitted.

"When my—my husband made the attempt against Roy, the night you and Roy were aloft together, he violated Mr. Lynch's code. He considered it a blot upon his honor. He told him—Angus—as much. It happened in his watch, you see. Afterward, a week ago, when he discovered what my—my husband really intended doing, he came to me and offered his assistance and Connelly's in our—Roy's and mine—escape from the ship. We were both in danger, he said, and must leave together. I think he overheard a conversation between my—my husband and Mr. Fitzgibbon.

"Roy suggested the long-boat, and Mr. Lynch agreed. Roy can navigate, of course, and there are islands not distant from us. Mr. Lynch planned to launch the boat some night, some mid-watch, when the mate, and—and Captain Swope were in their berths. He would take the precaution of barring their doors, in case they wakened; but he hoped to get us away so quickly and quietly they would know nothing about it until hours later."

"But was he going to stay by the ship? Why, when the skipper woke up, he'd skin him alive!" I exclaimed.

"He said not, and I think not," was her response. "He has sailed under my—my husband for years. He is not like Mr. Fitzgibbon—he does not fear Angus; Angus fears him. He knows things that have happened in this ship that Angus dare not have told on shore. He refused when we urged him to come with us; he declared he would be in no danger, that he could guard himself. I think he can."

"But now—I don't know what he will do. If we can free Roy in time—if we can stop trouble for'ard, then I know Mr. Lynch will keep his promise; he will lock up Angus and the mate, get them out of the way somehow until Roy and I have left the ship. But if the men rise before we have gone—then he will think his duty is to the ship. He will not think of us, and my—my husband will do what he wishes. Do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am. But we have until midnight or after, and it's just a little past two bells now. Ten minutes more, ma'am, and I'll have this hole open."

BUT it took a little longer than ten minutes. Three bells struck while I was still whittling and digging at the calking in the seams with my sheath-knife. But the echo of the big ship's bell for'ard had hardly died away when I carefully, ever so carefully, lifted up and laid back the cut-away section of the deck.

The lady and I knelt by the side of the

hole and peered down into the littered darkness. We could make out dimly heaps of barrels and boxes. A damp, chill air rushed up into our faces, carrying with it the sound of a scurrying rat, and another sound which made the lady gasp and tremble and caused me to grind my teeth with rage. It was a long-drawn-out sigh, the moan of a man in agony of flesh or spirit. It was Newman's voice. Mingling with it, and following it, came the low, demoniac chuckle of Captain Swope.

Lying flat and craning my neck into the hole, I saw, far over on the other side of the ship, the flicker of a lantern upon boxes. I immediately drew back, got to my feet and extinguished the lamp in the gimbals. Then I snatched a blanket from the steward's bunk and spread it across the hole. That done, there was no danger of light or draft betraying us to the man below.

I asked orders of the lady, and discussed ways and means with her. It was decided at once that I should effect Newman's release—and she gave me the two small keys that the Chinaman had filched. I was the stronger and more active, and could more easily make my way about in the dark, cluttered lazaret; besides, her work lay above. Swope was evidently pleasuring himself by viewing and taunting his helpless prisoner; he must be drawn away from this amusement.

She could not go on deck herself, she said; Fitzgibbon was up there and would see her—and she was supposed to be locked in her room. But she would send Wong on deck with a message to Lynch; she would have Lynch sing out for the captain's presence on the poop. When the captain responded to the hail, I was to accomplish my task. I was to bring Newman to this room. Our next move depended upon chance—and Lynch. Newman and I must get forward, some way, and quiet the men; Lynch would take care of Swope. She had a fine faith in the second mate, had the lady.

I had never been in the lazaret, the task of breaking out stores having usually fallen to the stiffs. But I knew it was a big storeroom, comprising the whole 'tween-decks beneath the cabin space. The *Golden Bough*, like most clippers of her day, sometimes carried emigrant passengers, and had need of a spacious lazaret.

The lady sketched the lay of the land for me. The hatch to the lazaret was in the saloon floor, well aft, on the starboard side. Wong was more familiar than any man with the lazaret's interior, and he had decided the deck should be cut through in his room, rather than at any other point. This, said the lady, was because farther aft, on this side of the ship, a strong room occupied the lazaret space—aye; the same strong room which so tickled the fancy of some of my shipmates. The Chinaman had planned with foresight; he had even disposed stores below to convenience and shield the man who played rescuer. When I dropped through the hole, the lady told me, I would find myself in a narrow alleyway, walled with tiers of beef-casks and other stores; if I followed this alleyway, I would come to the lazaret hatch, near where Newman was secured.

She thought I should wait until I heard the captain leave the lazaret. But to this I demurred. The success of the scheme might well depend upon the leeway of a moment's time. The ship's noises, always present in a ship's hold, would cover any slight noise I might make. Truth to tell, that sound of Newman in pain had thrown me into a fever of impatience to get to his side—and I suspect it rendered the lady less cautious, too.

"God bless you, boy—and, oh, be careful!" she whispered.

I drew back the blanket and lowered my body into the opening. I hung by my hands an instant, and felt her draw the blanket over my head as she covered the hole again. Then I let go, and dropped.

I CROUCHED behind a row of flour-barrels, which stood on end, handy to the hatch, and peered through the chinks. The captain had hung his lantern on a beam overhead, and its rays limned like a stage-setting an open space some six feet square. Aye; a stage-setting, and the scene a torture-chamber. I bit my lips to restrain a cry of horror and rage when I looked through the chinks between the barrels, and it was with difficulty I kept myself from rushing forth and falling upon the fiend who had contrived and was enjoying the scene.

Captain Swope was seated on a keg. He had disposed the lantern so its light fell full upon Newman—it illumined himself

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for my eyes as well—and he was talking to the prisoner, mocking him.

And Newman! It was the sight of him that made me choke, that made me finger my knife-hilt. Newman—my friend!

He was at the far end of that open space, trussed up to the starboard limbers. Trussed up—and in what way! You will remember, when they placed him under arrest, the captain ordered his hands ironed behind his back. The reason was now apparent. His hands were still behind his back—aye; when they trussed him up, they drew up his hands until they were on level with his head, and secured him in that position. His feet were also ironed, and the chain lashed to a limber. So he stood, or, rather, hung—for he could not stand properly with his arms wrenched back in that position—and the whole weight of his body dragged upon his wrists and shoulder-blades. So he had stood during the hours that had passed since afternoon. Torture, agony—that is what it meant.

I THOUGHT I recognized Fitzgibbon's handiwork in this torture; though I dare say it was originally Swope's invention. But I had seen Fitzgibbon use this same method of inflicting pain and terror.

And Newman had been enduring this pain for hours. But now, I thought, he must be mercifully unconscious, for his head hung upon his breast and he made no sign he heard the captain's gibes.

It was sport to Swope's liking, and he was enjoying himself right royally. Aye; I could tell. I lay in my retreat, waiting for the hail that would draw the beast on deck, and while I waited I had perforce to listen to him and observe his manner. Oh, Swope was having a fine time!

He talked, and I heard. Aye; I heard! All unconsciously, Yankee Swope made me witness to his confession of black treachery, and to deeds more loathsome and cruel than my mind could well conceive. I did not hear much, but enough to make me wonder how so vile a thing could be hidden in the shape of a man.

"Why don't you call upon God to help you?" says he. "He has helped you a lot in the past—eh, Roy? The just and merciful One—don't you remember how old Baintree would rant about Him? And how you approved? You were such a damned Puritan, Roy—always. You wouldn't do this, or that; you would keep yourself clean of vice—your very words, Roy! You would be honest and just with all men. Bah! You agreed with old Baintree—eh, Roy?—you would make yourself worthy of his daughter. And didn't you, though—with my help? Eh, Roy? My help—not God's! Angus and the devil did it. I killed the old fool, and God lets you suffer for it. Well, come to think of it, Roy, it's sound theology—vicarious atonement, eh? You got stripes, and I got Mary—and her money, Roy, which I have spent most pleasurably. Divine justice! Well, well!

"But you were always a fool, Roy—a stupid, trusting kind of fool. You trusted me—didn't you?—your bosom friend, Angus, your boyhood chum, whose vices and wild ways grieved you. Fool! If you had had my wits, you would have known I hated you. But you trusted in me, and God, and the goodness of men! Well, well!"

To all this, Newman gave no answer. He hung silent in his bonds, his face hidden by his posture. His indifference seemed to pique his tormentor. Swope rose from his seat and stepped close to the silent figure.

"But you are not thinking of yourself—eh, Roy? You're thinking of her. Well, well—how sweet! But sentiment was always your strong point. Think hard about her, Roy! She's almost as near the end of her tether as you. But not quite as near. I intend to break the haughty spirit before I—er—eliminate her. Oh, yes; it will break. I know the sure way—trust Angus and the devil to know that! I intend to make a strumpet of the wench for Fitzgibbon's pleasure—then she'll eliminate herself. Ah, that wakes you up!"

It did, indeed. Newman lifted his face to the light and gazed at the creature before him—aye; and I could see the sweat of agony upon his lined and haggard features. He did not speak. He looked his unutterable loathing; his expression was that of one regarding something indescribably obscene and revolting. And he pursed his lips and spat in Swope's face.

The skipper stopped and swabbed his cheek with his sleeve. I thought he would strike Newman, kick him, practise some devilish cruelty upon him in payment.

Aye; I was crouched for the spring, with my sheath-knife ready. If he had laid finger upon Newman, I should have had his life in an instant. I was all the barbarian that moment, my new-found scruples forgotten. I was in a killing mood—what man would not have been?

But Captain Swope did not attempt to repay the insult with any physical cruelty. He knew he was already racking his enemy's body to the limit of endurance—and his aim, I discovered, was to supplement this bodily suffering with mental torture. Indeed, Swope seemed pleased by Newman's act. He laughed as he wiped his face.

"That stings—eh, Roy? It's true—be certain of that, you soft-hearted fool! I tell the truth sometimes, Roy—when it serves my purpose. And I want you to imagine the details of what is going to happen to her. Think of it, Roy—the lady of the *Golden Bough*, the saintly Mrs. Swope, the sweet Mary Baintree that was!"

CHUCKLING, Swope resumed his seat. He leaned forward and watched Newman with hawklike intensity. But Newman gave him little cause to chuckle; his head dropped again upon his breast, and he gave no sound, no movement.

"Why don't you call on God?" asked Swope. "Why don't you call on me?"

Newman lifted his head.

"You degenerate beast!" he said. He said it evenly, without passion, and immediately withdrew his features from the other's scrutiny.

But the captain was satisfied. He slapped his thigh with delight and talked on, describing villainies to come and villainies accomplished; the tale of his misdeeds seemed to possess him. He gloried in them, gloated over them. And as I listened, I realized, ignorant young whelp though I was, that this man was different from any man I had ever met or imagined. He wasn't human; he was a freak, a human-looking thing with a tiger's nature.

"I know what you are thinking, Roy," says he. "You are thinking that my brave and upright second mate will prevent it happening to our dear little Mary? Am I right, eh? Vain thought! Our friend Lynch will not be here to interfere. I have seen to that. He grows dangerous, does Bully Lynch, so—elimination. Ah, I could write a treatise upon the art of elimination—couldn't I? Angus Swope, the great eliminator! It's my specialty—eh, Roy?

"Neatness, and thoroughness, and dispatch—that's my style, Roy. Everything shipshape, with no loose ends flying. I left no loose ends that night in Bellingham, did I? Not one—unless it be you, and you will be tucked out of sight very soon.

"What a simple fool you were! You would have me, and me alone, on board your ship to dinner; you would make merry with your old chum; you would have his congratulations upon your betrothal. Well, you got them. I told you the news made me happy, didn't I?

"And so it did, Roy. Because all the time I sat opposite you, listening to your ranting and raving, I was thinking how your damned sentiment fell in with my plans. You would have a quiet evening with me. So you sent all hands ashore—except Stord, your steward, who was my man. Aye; body and soul my man! And when I tired of your bleating platitudes—why, three little drops of chloral in your glass, Roy, and you offended my ears no more. Elimination—eh, Roy?

"Do you know what happened then? I wager you've wondered many a time what really happened after you fell asleep so unaccountably with your head in your plate. Well, I'll tell you. I decoyed Captain Baintree on board. I sent Stord to him with a yarn that you were ill and wished to see him. The old fool came in a flutter, as I knew he would. And as he leaned over you in your own cabin, I—er—separated him from his temporal worries, with an iron pin taken from your own rail. Then I gave you a clout—it has left a beautiful scar, I note—and put the pin in your hand. And so your mate discovered you in the morning, just as I planned he should. And your steward's testimony and my reluctant admissions finished you. You see, Roy—neatness and thoroughness!

"I took Stord to sea with me, as my steward. But, unfortunately, he went over the side one dark night, off the Horn. A loose end tucked in—eh, Roy?

"And I'll tuck in other loose ends between now and dawn—you, for instance, and our brave Lynch. I have it already written down for Fitz to copy into the log-book. 'During the fighting, Mr. Lynch, second mate, was stabbed by one of the mutineers; but owing to the darkness and confusion, his assailant was not recognized.' That's how the log will read when we bowse into port. And—'during the fighting, the sailor, Newman, attempted to escape from custody and was shot by the captain.' You see, Roy; everything shipshape! A line for each in the log—and two loose ends tucked in—eliminated!

"You will have some time in which to think it over before it happens, Roy. You should thank me for that—for giving you something to think about. It will take your mind off your pain, eh? Yes; you need something to think about, for you'll hang there for four or five hours yet. No danger of you sleeping—eh, Roy? Well, keep your ears open and you'll be forewarned. There'll be some shooting on deck. I've gone to a great deal of trouble to bring it about; your shipmates are a gutless crew, Roy, and I had begun to think I could not get a fight out of them. But the swabs are coming aft at the end of the mid-watch. Eight bells in the mid-watch—count the bells, Roy. Eight bells—elimination!

"Then there will be just one loose end left—and you know what I have planned for her. Think about it, Roy—think about our darling little Mary! Ah, that stings—eh, Roy?"

It did, indeed. Newman lifted the face of a madman to his torturer. All the pent-up fury in his soul burst forth in one explosive oath.

"God blast you forever, Angus!" he cried.

Just that, and no more. Newman had his grip again. He was no man to indulge in impotent ravings.

But the outburst was sufficient to delight Captain Swope. He threw back his head and laughed long, that chuckling, demon's laugh of his.

"I told you to call upon God," was his gleeful answer to Newman. "And you have! Now we'll see who wins—you and God, or Angus and the devil! Eh, Roy—who wins?

"We'll see, Roy—we'll see if God takes your advice. We'll see if He helps you, or Lynch—or Mary. Ah, the saintly Mary, the pure, the unapproachable! We'll see if He keeps her from—eliminating herself!

"That's the way of it, Roy. Clever—yes? Neatness and thoroughness, and everything shipshape and Bristol fashion—that's my style, Roy. I know Mary—who should know her better than her legal spouse—eh Roy?—and I have arranged matters so she will tuck in her own end. Listen, Roy; I have another item for the log-book, which Fitzgibbon will copy. It needs but a date-line to be complete. It will read like this: 'To-day, while suffering from an attack of temporary insanity, the captain's wife destroyed herself. The captain is broken-hearted.' With details added, Roy. And the yarn cabled home when we make port. Suicide at sea—and I am broken-hearted! Artistic, eh? And she'll do it—you know she'll do it!"

He sat there watching Newman, waiting. I suppose he expected and desired a fresh outburst from the prisoner. But he was disappointed; Newman gave no sign.

"Ah, well, I fear I've overstayed my welcome this visit," he said finally. He got to his feet and stood before Newman with legs spraddled and arms akimbo, drinking in the picture of the other man's utter misery. "Interesting chat we've had—old times, future and all that—eh, Roy? But a sailor's work, you know—like a woman's—never done. I have duties to attend to, Roy. But I will return—ah, yes; you know I will return. You'll wait here for me—eh, Roy? Anxiously awaiting my return, counting the bells against my coming. Well—remember—eight bells in the middle watch."

HE TURNED and stepped toward the ladder. With his foot raised to the bottom step, he stopped and stared aloft, mouth agape. I stared, too, and listened.

We heard a shot, a single pistol-shot.

The captain wheeled upon Newman. His hand flew to his pistol-pocket. But he did not draw. He would have died then and there if he had, for I was tensed for the leap.

But he was uncertain. This was not the hour—and the other shots, the volley we both expected, did not come. Instead, came the second mate's voice:

"Connelly — the wheel! Hard alee! Weather main-brace!" Then, clearer, as he shouted through the cabin skylights, "Captain—on deck, quick!"

It was the hail for which I had waited so long and anxiously. But the news that came with it was strange and startling.

"The man at the wheel," shouted Lynch, "has jumped overboard with the mate!" Then his cry went forward: "Man overboard!"

Swope leaped for the ladder. I saw consternation in his face as he scurried aloft. So I knew that this was something he hadn't arranged.

I WAS at Newman's side before Captain Swope's feet vanished from the ladder. If he had paused to close the lazaret hatch behind him, he must surely have seen me. But he did not pause. I heard his steps racing up the companion-stairs to the poop, and his voice crying the command:

"Watch the main-deck, mister! Light a flare!"

I threw my arms about Newman and babbled in his ear:

"Oh, the beast! It's I—Jack! The devil—I heard what he said! Come to free you!" Truth to tell, the things I had overheard unnerved me somewhat, and I was incoherent, almost, from rage and horror.

But Newman brought me to myself in short order.

"I know; but not so loud—they'll hear you." Aye; his first words, and he smiled into my face. This man on the rack smiled, and thought clearly while I babbled. "Be quick," he bade me. "Cut the lashings."

I obeyed in jig-time. The chains of both the hand- and foot-irons were secured to the limbers by rope lashings. With two strokes of my knife I severed them. Before I could catch him, Newman fell forward upon his face. His limbs could not support him.

I knelt by his side, sobbing and spluttering, and fishing in my pocket for the keys the lady had given me. It was the sight of his raw, bleeding wrists and ankles that maddened me—aye; the sight of them would have maddened a saint. You will recall that the old man had commanded that Newman's wrists be tightly cuffed, and he had seen to it that the leg-cuffs were equally tight. Tight ironing was a favorite sport of Swope's; he was notorious for it among sailormen. I saw the results upon Newman.

The flesh above the irons was puffed and inflamed; the constriction and chafing had broken the skin, and the cuffs upon both arms and legs were buried in the raw wounds. Exquisite agony—aye; trust Swope to produce that! I had to push back the swollen, bruised mass before I could insert the little flat keys and effect the release.

When I had them off, I turned Newman over on his back and, with my arm about him, prepared to lift him erect. Before I could do so, assistance arrived. Light feet pattered down the lazaret ladder; there was a swish of skirts, a gasp, and the lady was on her knees by Newman's side.

"Roy—Roy—I was in time!" she cried. Her arms went round his neck.

I released him to her for the instant, and straightened up and listened. There was noise on deck, and confusion. The ship was in stays; she hung there, aback. I could hear Lynch, somewhere for'ard, bawling orders, and, overhead, Swope sang out to the wheel, and then hailed the roundhouse:

"Roundhouse, there—on deck and lend a hand! Man the lifeboat—lifeboat falls, there! For God's sake, mister—what's the matter there on deck?"

Oh, he was worried, was Swope. It showed in his voice. For once, his tone was not full and musical; it was shrill and screechy. He was sorely shaken, madly anxious to save his faithful jackal; the eliminator had not planned Fitzgibbon's removal.

Thoughts, questions rushed through my mind. I listened for other sounds—for shots and shouts and sounds of strife. For there was confusion up there on the dark decks, and the captain had forgotten his caution and withdrawn his ambush. I knew that Boston and Blackie would not overlook this chance. Promise or no promise, they would profit by this occasion.

It was this thought that spurred me to action. We must get out of this hole we were in; the lazaret was a trap. The die was cast; the mutiny was on—or would be in a moment.

I said as much to my companions. Newman attempted to get to his feet.

"A hand, Jack—it must be stopped," he said.

I gave him the hand. More than that, I took him upon my back and tottered up the ladder with him, the lady assisting. She knew what had happened on deck, and she told us in a word or two.

She had not been able to find Wong—we afterward discovered that Wong had gone forward to the galley and surprised the crew at conference and had been detained prisoner by them—so she crawled up the companion-ladder herself and lurked in the cuddy, waiting for a chance to speak with Lynch. The nigger was at the wheel, she said. Fitzgibbon walked up to him and struck him—as he had struck him many, many times before. But this time Nigger did not submit—he whipped out his knife and stabbed the mate. More than that, he grasped the mate in his powerful arms, dragged him to the taffrail and flung him overboard. It happened so quickly that neither the tradesman, Connelly nor Lynch, both of whom were on the poop, could interfere. But Lynch took a shot at Nigger, and perhaps struck him, for Nigger went over the rail and into the sea with his victim.

It was Nigger, despised, half-lunatic Nigger, who was not in my reckoning, or in Swope's, who put the match to the tinder and upset such carefully laid plans. As I feared, the revolt of the crew blazed up immediately. My shipmates were eager—too eager. As it turned out, their precipitancy was to cost them their chance of victory, for they began to riot while the three tradesmen were still handy to the roundhouse door; though, indeed, they had no knowledge—as had I—of the captain's ambuscade.

I staggered into the saloon and set Newman down upon the divan which ran round the half-round, and which was but a step from the hatch. He got to his feet at once, and, though the lady and I stretched out our arms to catch him, this time he did not fall. He swayed drunkenly and hobbled when he took a step, but such was his vitality and so strong the urge of his will that life was already returning to his limbs.

It was just then that pandemonium broke out on deck—a shot, a string of shots, and a bedlam of howls and yells. Overhead was bedlam, too. The skipper's tune changed instanter. He had been singing out to Lynch to "topsail haul," and to the tradesmen to man the boat falls; but now he was screaming to the latter in a voice shaken with excitement—or panic—to regain their posts, to get into the roundhouse and "turn loose on 'em—pepper 'em! And, for God's sake, throw out the flares!"

Oh, the great eliminator was shocked most unpleasantly in that moment, I think—to discover, when his trusty mate was overboard, that his mutinous crew had firearms!

I LOOKED to Newman for orders, for he was now in command of our forlorn hope. But he had his arm about the lady's shoulders and was speaking urgently into her ear. My thought was of a place to hide. I ran toward the cabin alleyway. I had no intention of going out on that dangerous deck—my object was to see if the inner door to the sail-locker was unlocked. In the sail-locker, I thought, we could hide, the three of us, until the fight died down.

But my design was frustrated. Before I reached the sail-locker, the door to the deck, at the end of the alleyway, burst open, and the tradesman, Morton, pitched headlong over the base-board. He scrambled to his hands and knees and scuttled toward me. There was a whistling thud near my head. I leaped back into the cabin, out of range, so quickly that I tripped and sat down hard upon the deck—for a shot fired after the fleeing Morton had just missed my skull.

Morton crawled into the saloon and looked at me with a stupid wonder in his face. He was wounded. He nursed his shoulder, and there was a spreading stain upon his white shirt.

"They have guns—in the rigging," says he. Then he grunted, and collapsed, unconscious.

The heavy roars of shotguns, for which my ear was cocked, did not come. There were two pistols in action overhead, and pistol-shots rattled forward, and I could tell from the sounds that a free fight was raging somewhere on the main-deck. But the heavier discharges did not come, and for an instant I thought—aye; and hoped—that the tradesmen had been cut off from the roundhouse.

Suddenly the saloon grew bright with a reflected glare. I was on my feet again, and I peered into the alleyway, looking out through the door Morton had opened. The roundhouse cut off any view of the main-deck, but I could see that the whole deck—aye; the whole ship—was alight with a growing glare, a dazzling greenish-white light.

And then I knew what Captain Swope

meant when he screamed for "flares." Distress-flares, signal-flares, such as a ship in trouble might use. . He had stocked the roundhouse with them.

Cunning—aye; deadly cunning. This was something Boston and Blackie had not dreamed of. A flare thrown on deck when the men came aft—and slaughter made easy for the defenders of the roundhouse!

Something of this I spoke aloud to Newman. There was no answer, and I became conscious he was not behind me. I wheeled about. Newman, with the lady's assistance, was hobbling up the ladder to the deck above. I swore my amazement and dismay at what seemed to me madness, but I hurried after them and emerged on the poop at their heels.

The night was banished by the strong light flaring for'ard. That was my impression when I leaped out on deck. When I turned forward, I saw the whole ship bathed in that light. Not one but a half-dozen flares were burning at once. They had been thrown upon the deck both to port and starboard. Everything on the decks was brightly revealed, every ring-bolt, the pins in the rails, deadeyes, sails, gear—aye; every rope in the rigging was boldly etched against the glowing background. With that one sweeping glance I took in the scene. High up in the main-rigging, almost the the futtock-shrouds, the figure of a man was revealed; he was blazing away in the direction of the poop with a revolver. On the deck, near the mainmast, the second mate was laying about him with a capstan-bar, and a dozen men seemed boiling over each other in efforts to close with him, and other figures lay stretched upon the deck.

So much for what I saw forward; what concerned me that instant was what was right before my eyes. Captain Swope was leaning against the mizzen fife-rail, screened by the mast from those for'ard, returning the fire of the man in the rigging—but no; even as I clapped eyes upon him, he shot, and I saw he aimed, not at the man in the rigging but at the group fighting on the deck. At his second officer, no less! Aye; and I understood in a flash why I had not heard the shotguns. The tradesmen had not Swope's murderous intent toward Lynch, and they held their fire because they could not rake the gang without hitting him.

The tradesman, Connelly, was crouched against the companion-hatch; he was staring after Newman and the lady, mouth agape. He saw them directly they appeared on deck, which Swope did not. He raised his gun uncertainly, then lowered it, then raised it again, covering Newman's broad back—and by that time I was upon him, my clutch upon his wrist and my right fist impacted violently against his head. It was a knock-out blow at the base of the brain, and he slumped down, unconscious. I straightened up, with the gun in my hand.

IT WAS at this instant that Captain Swope became aware of our presence. It was Newman himself who attracted his attention—aye; and the attention of the whole ship as well.

For Newman had marched into the light. He stood now almost at the forward poop rail with his arms raised above his head, and he sent his voice forward in a stentorian hail—a cry that was like a thunderclap.

"Stop fighting, lads! Stop it, I say! It is I—Newman! Stop fighting and go for'ard!"

If ever a human face showed amazement and discomfiture, Swope's did. He had been so busy at his game of potting his officer he did not see Newman until the latter walked into his range of vision and sent forth his hail. He could have shot Newman then, and I could not have prevented, for he had his weapon leveled. But this sudden apparition seemed to paralyze him; he just lowered his arm and stared.

It startled and paralyzed not him alone. The struggle on the main-deck ceased abruptly. It was the strangest thing I ever beheld, the way Newman's thunderous command seemed to turn to graven images the men on deck. They were frozen into grotesque attitudes, arms drawn back to strike, boots lifted to kick. Lynch stood with his capstan-bar poised, as though he were at bat in a baseball game. Every face was lifted to the giant figure towering there on the poop.

Newman repeated his command. He did not beg or entreat; he commanded, and I don't think there was a sailor or stiff on the main-deck who, after his first word, dreamed of disobeying him. Such was the big man's superiority; such was the dominance his personality had acquired over our minds. I tell you, we of the fo'c's'le looked upon Newman as of different clay.

And not only the fo'c's'le eyes regarded him in this light. There were the tradesmen peering out of the roundhouse ports, with never a thought in their minds of disobeying his injunction. I had it from their own lips afterward. It was not just surprise at the big fellow's sudden appearance that stayed their hands; it was the power of his personality. There was Lynch, arrested by Newman's voice in mid-stroke, as it were. There was Swope, standing palsied and impotent, with a growing terror in his face.

"Go for'ard, lads! Go below! Come up here, Lynch! Not another blow, men—for'ard with you!"

The frozen figures on the deck came to life. There was a murmur, a shuffling of feet, and Lynch lowered his great club. But it was an obedient noise.

From one quarter came the single note of dissent. The man in the main-rigging sang out—it was Boston's voice.

"Go aft, mates!" he shouted. "We've got them—we've won—don't listen to him!" Then he threw his voice at Newman. "Damn you, big 'un, you've spoiled the game!" A flash followed the oath, and a splinter flew from the deck at Newman's feet.

There was a flash from my gun as well. I fired without taking conscious aim. I swear an invisible hand seemed to lift my arm; a finger not mine seemed to press the trigger—and that greedy, murderous rascal in the rigging screamed and loosed his hold. He struck the sheer-pole in his descent and bounced into the sea.

The shots seemed to waken Captain Swope out of his lethargy of surprise and terror. He had suddenly moved with catlike swiftness. When I lowered my eyes from the rigging, I saw he had left his refuge behind the mizzenmast and was standing on the open deck. Aye; there he stood in that light, which had reached its maximum, revealed to all eyes—and stamped upon his face was an expression of insane fury so terrible and deadly he seemed not a human being at all but a mad beast crouched to spring. His lips were drawn back from his teeth and a froth appeared upon his black beard. The crowd forward saw the demon unmasked in his face, even as I, and from them arose a gasping "A-ah!" of horror.

The sound caused the lady, who was standing at Newman's elbow, to turn round, or, perhaps, it was the feel of Swope's burning eyes that spun her about so quickly. He was raising his arm—the arm that held the gun—not quickly but slowly and carefully. With a stab of horror I saw him aim, not at the man but at the woman.

No outside power this time seemed to aid me. I shot. I should have hit the beast—he was not ten paces distant—but only a click answered when my hammer fell. My gun was empty. I threw up my arm, intending to hurl the weapon, and I think I cried out. Swope shot—and the lady had thrown up her hands and was falling.

YOU must understand—this all happened in a brief instant of time. Aye; it was but a short moment since we stepped out on deck. What happened after that shot must be measured by seconds.

For the lady was still falling and my hand was still reaching behind me to gather energy for a throw when Newman bore down upon his enemy. I had not seen him turn round, even, and there he was at arm's grips with the captain. There was another flash from Swope's revolver—in Newman's very face. It was a miss, for Newman's hands—helpless lumps of flesh but a few moments before—closed upon Swope's neck. I saw Newman's face. It was a terrible face—the face of an enraged and smiting god.

He lifted Swope from his feet with that throat-grip. He whirled him like a flail and smashed him down upon the deck and let him go. And there Yankee Swope lay, sprawled and still, his head bent back at a fatal angle. A broken neck, as a glance at the lolling head would inform, and, as we discovered later, a broken back as well. It was death that Newman's bare hands dealt in that furious second.

Newman did not waste so much as a glance at the work of his hands. He had turned to the lady with a cry in his throat, a low cry of pain and grief which changed at once to a shout of gladness. For the lady was stirring, getting to her feet, or trying to.

Newman gathered her slight form into his great arms. I heard him exclaim: "Where, Mary? Did it—" And she answered dazedly, "I am all right—not hit." He took a step toward me, toward the companion. The swelling murmur from the deck arrested him.

He walked to the break of the poop with the woman in his arms. She seemed like a child held to his breast. He spoke to the men below in a hushed, solemn voice.

"It is ended," he said. "The beast is dead."

As he stood there, the flares commenced to go out. One by one they guttered and were extinguished, and the black night swept down like a falling curtain. Four bells chimed in the cabin.

IT WAS the end, even as Newman said. The end of the mutiny, the end of hate and dissension in that ship, the end, for us, of Newman himself and the lady. Peace came to the *Golden Bough* that night, for the first time, I suppose, in her bitter, blood-stained history—a peace that was bought with suffering and death, as we discovered when we reckoned the cost of the night's work.

Swope was dead—for which there was a prayer of thanks in every man's heart. Fitzgibbon was gone, and the nigger. Boston was dead at my hand; his partner, Blackie, lay stark in the scuppers, as did also the stiff named Green, each with a bashed-in skull, the handiwork of Lynch.

Such was the death list for that night's work. It was no heavier, I think—though of much different complexion—than the list Captain Swope had planned.

As for the wounded—God's truth, the *Golden Bough* was manned by a crew of cripples for weeks after. Lynch had wrought terribly, there on the main-deck—broken pates, broken fingers, a cracked wrist, a broken foot, and three men wounded, though not seriously, by Swope's and Connelly's shots. Such were the fo'c's'le's lighter casualties. Aft, the list was shorter. Morton had a bullet-wound in the shoulder; it would lay him up for the rest of the passage, but was not dangerous. Connelly had a lump behind his ear. Lynch was bruised a bit; otherwise he had escaped scatheless.

The lady was not really hurt at all. Swope's bullet plowed through her mass of hair, creasing her so lightly that the skin was unbroken, though the impact knocked her down.

I was almost the only man on the ship who had no mark upon him of the night's madness, and Lynch—or perhaps it was Newman—made me bo'sun of the deck in the labor of bringing order out of chaos. I rallied the unhurt and lightly hurt, and we carried the worse injured into the cabin, where the lady and Newman attended them. I opened the barricaded galley and freed the frightened Chinamen, Wong and the cook and the cabin-boy, and Holy Joe, the parson. As I found out afterward, Holy Joe, when he learned of the intended mutiny, threatened, in vain attempt to stop it, to go aft and blow the plot. Blackie and Boston wanted to kill him for the threat, but the squareheads would not have it so, and he, too, was shut up in the galley.

By Lynch's order, we launched the dingey, and, with me at the tiller and two lordly tradesmen at the oars, set out in humane but hopeless quest for the mate and the nigger. I cruised about for nigh an hour and came back empty-handed. We had not really expected to find them or trace of them. Fitzgibbon had been stabbed, and it was known, also, that he did not know how to swim; and as for the nigger, "I plugged him as he jumped," said Lynch.

When we got back, Lynch had me muster the available hands, and we launched the long-boat. All the rest of the night Wong and his two under-servants cargoed that craft with stores of every kind.

One other man had lost his mess-number in that ship, we discovered as the night wore on—the traitor, the cockney. We found not hide or hair of him; he was gone from the ship, leaving no trace. At least, no trace I could discover. But when I looked for him, I became conscious of a new attitude toward me on the part of my shipmates. I had been their mate, in a way their leader and champion. Now, by virtue of Lynch's word—and Newman's—I was their boss. I was no longer one of them. Aye; and, sailorlike, they showed it by their reserve. They said, truthfully enough, they did not know what had become of Cockney—and they kept their guesses to themselves. But my own guess was as good—and as true. Boston and Blackie had attended to Cockney—I could imagine how. A knife across the windpipe and a boost over the side—without doubt some such fate was Cockney's.

Lynch made no effort to put the ship on

her course. We left the yards as they were, and drifted all the rest of the night. I and the unwounded tradesmen kept the deck; in the cabin the lady and Newman labored and conferred with Lynch and Holy Joe. Aye; Holy Joe, as well as myself, was lifted to higher estate by that night's happenings. He lived aft, even as I, the rest of the voyage, and was doctor of bodies as well as of souls.

Near dawn they called me into the cabin and put dead man's shoes upon my feet, so to speak.

"Shreve, it is my duty to take the ship into port," says Lynch. "What will be the outcome of to-night's work, I do not know. But I do not fear. My testimony and that of the sailmakers and carpenters, to say nothing of your story and the stories of the other men forward, will be more than sufficient to convince any court of justice. There will be no jailing because of to-night's trouble—you may tell the men that."

"Yes, sir," I replied. Aye; it was good news to take for'ard to the poor shaking wretches in the fo'c's'le.

"You understand—I am captain for the remainder of the passage," Lynch went on. "And I have decided to appoint you chief mate. Connelly will be second mate."

Aye; that was it. Jack Shreve, chief mate of the *Golden Bough!* "I have decided," says Lynch—but I knew the decision belonged to Newman and the lady, who were smiling at me across the table.

"And you understand—they are leaving in the long-boat," added Lynch.

I looked at my friend and the lady, and my new honor was bitter and worthless in my mouth.

"Take me with you," I urged.

"To share an outlaw's career? No, lad; we must go alone," said Newman. I remember he added to Lynch, "If this boy proves the friend to you he was to me, you will be a lucky man, Captain."

THE sky was just graying with the coming day when the two left the ship. But before they went over the side there took place in the growing light on the deck before the cabin a scene as strange and solemn as any I have seen since. Holy Joe married them, there on the deck, and in the scuppers, behind the lady's back, covered up with a spare sail, lay the ship's dead, Yankee Swope among them. Aye; the parson tied the knot—for this life and next, as he said—and I was best man and Captain Lynch gave away the bride.

"Roy Waldon, do you take this woman—" That was the way the parson put it, standing there before them, with his one good hand holding the Book, peering up into Newman's face through his puffed, blackened eyes. A minister in dungaree! "Mary Swope, do you take this man—" That was how he put it. And though the lady's face was wan and haggard, yet there was a glory in it beyond power to describe.

And then they cast off in the long-boat, those two who were now one. Newman stepped the mast and drew aft the sheet, and the little craft caught the breeze and scudded away from the ship. We lined the rail and cheered our farewell. I wept.

A long time we watched them. The sun leaped up from the sea, and the long-boat seemed to sail into its golden heart. And after the sun had risen above it, the boat was visible for a long time as a dwindling, ever-dwindling speck. I moved up on to the poop, the longer to see. So did Lynch. Side by side we watched the speck dip over the rim of the sea.

Lynch sighed and walked away. I heard him exclaim, and turned to observe him picking up something from the deck. He held it out to me in the palm of his hand.

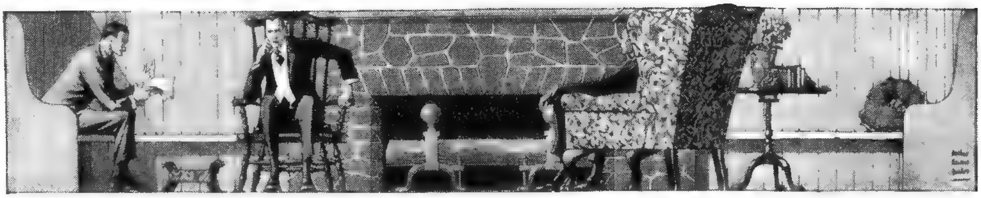
It was a little wisp of hair, the lady's hair, a relic of the battle. Lynch stared at it; then he looked out over the sea into the path of the sun. Aye; and there was that in his eyes which opened mine. I began at last to understand Bucko Lynch—"Captain" Lynch, as he was to remain to the end of his days. I knew from that look in his eye why no person would now ever say to him, "Do you take this woman?"

Slowly Lynch put the little wisp of hair into his waistcoat pocket. He drew a deep breath and shrugged his shoulders, then hailed me with seamanly bruskness.

"Lively, now, mister—we'll put the ship on her course!"

"Yes, Captain," I answered. And the "mister" roared his first command along those decks.

THE END



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

THIS will be an author's evening exclusively in the Chimney Corner circle, because this month's authors are more than usually interesting. There is Beldon Duff, whose "The Soul-Scar" opens this issue and who tells something about himself, but still refuses to disclose his identity.

A little about myself? All right—here goes! But not my name. I'm free, white and—over twenty-one. Never been in jail, and speak English with only a slight accent. When it comes to my stories—well, "Why mystery stories?" patient friends invariably ask. And my line of defense is always, "Why not?" After all, mayn't there be as much artistry in a collar ad as in a portrait? Mystery fiction isn't half as indigestible as all this supreme-of-sex stuff, and doesn't leave a bad taste in the mouth, either. I personally always pity a man who says he can't see anything in a mystery story.

Beldon Duff

Beldon Duff, preferring to conceal his identity, refuses to send a portrait, so we publish his autograph. Is there a handwriting expert among Everybody's readers who will make some interesting deductions?

I feel, somehow, that he's left his youth a long way behind.

To be sure, the life of a mystery-story writer isn't all beer and skittles. There's always that much-to-be-dreaded moment when the characters for each fresh tale begin to arrive—disconcerting, I'll say! It takes time to grow accustomed to having one's house filled with gangsters and cutthroats and ladies whose past is more rosy than their future. But eventually we all settle down, like the happy family in the zoo, and have quite a cozy time of it until, when the work is finished and they have to go, I'd actually have a case of the "magazine blues" if I didn't know that right round the corner is another troupe with their bags and hat-boxes and all their little fumadiddles just waiting till the path is clear and they can swoop down upon me.

RICHARDSON WRIGHT, the author of "Rolling Restaurants," this month's complete novel, has been the editor of *House and Garden* for eight years. Previous to that time, he suffered badly from a Siberian complex, having meandered round that corner of the world as a special correspondent. He says:

After five years, recovered from the Siberian complex and was immediately attacked by a gardening complex, superinduced by acquiring a place in the country. "Rolling Restaurants" was written during the winter of discontent when I was obliged to live in New York with no better outlook than the bums in Bryant Park. There isn't any special purpose in the story except a faint theory that I entertain to the effect that food is a very important commodity. During my life I have eaten quite a good bit of it, and, if ever I have time, I would like to go into food seriously—study eating as a fine art. But, as I said before, my present complex is attempting to make the raising of flowers a fine art.

THE author of "Dolly of Logan Square," James Oppenheim, said to himself early in life, "I must be a writer." A little later he said, "To be a writer, I must know life."

He really began to study life in a settlement house in New York. He went to Columbia University, worked on a magazine, then started a business of his own—not to succeed—just to learn business, to know life. But he wasn't satisfied. He started

Maria Moravsky giving, with the aid of a bronze stag, a lesson in how they ride reindeers in Siberia.

a magazine, but this did not teach him what he wanted.

But at last [he says] I found the door which led into those deeper mysteries the writer must know. This was psychoanalysis. Every one knows by now something about this. It is a method of probing and, one might almost say, vivisecting human nature. The unconscious is laid bare. I first went through analysis myself, for until we understand ourselves we cannot fully understand others. Then I became an analyst. People of all sorts—rich and poor, refined and crude, old and young, men and women—came to me and told me those deep secrets, those hidden troubles which not even an artist could have guessed. I saw life as it really is. I heard stories so strange and marvelous that they cannot be told, since they would not seem natural. I saw at last that which was necessary if I was to be a true writer—a writer who knew people and what they dreamed and what they lived.

FROM Marion Strobel, who wrote "The Wife Triumphant":

Please forgive my not answering your letter before—I have an excuse. I've been camping, snowed in, eleven thousand feet up, and miles and miles from a log cabin and a chimney corner. Of course, writing "The Wife Triumphant" was fun and not work. It was almost like riding the elephant again and feeling pleasantly majestic, and having Miss Neysa McMein and Mr. Franklin P. Adams throw peanuts at me. However, though Rommie is a very much alive elephant, and I did ride him in the circus—much to the consternation of certain Chicago friends in the audience—I am *not* the wife triumphant.

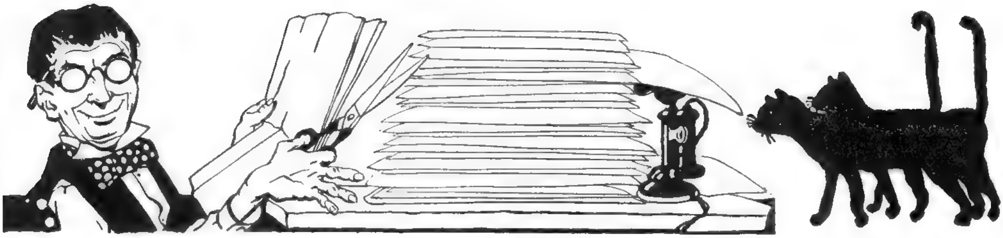
MARIA MORAVSKY ("For Justice's Sake") confesses that the only thing about her life which seems unusual to her is the constant failure of common sense. The most foolish thing she starts turns out to be wiser than the one she had thought to be wise. For instance:

In the days of the early revolution, I was urged to stay safely at home with a friendly Yiddish family. Disregarding the advice, I went into the streets, joined other hot-headed revolutionists, tumbled wounded from a barricade, was taken to hospital and there, next day, learned from the papers that the cautious family was "pogromized" and all its members killed. Another example: In the year 1917, when I decided to come to America, my friends tried to persuade me to stay in Russia "till safer times," at least till the end of the war. They told me that I would not be able to live on literature in "that commercialized country." Well, after a few months (as soon as I learned English) I began to earn rubles writing stories here, while my literary colleagues in Petrograd were starving, owing to the painfully changed economical conditions.

Don't such happenings tend to make one a fatalist?

SEWELL HAGGARD.

James Oppenheim, who says that to be a writer one must know life.



Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

(Saginaw, Mich., News-Courier)

Q. Who was Sam Patch? T. M.

A. Sam Patch was a lad widely known for daring leaps and dives. A jump from a bride into the Passaic River brought him notoriety. He was killed in 1829 when attempting a jump of 125 feet into the Genesee River. (MRS. D. B.)

That's nothing compared to the way "they" keep us on the jump nowadays.

(Van Amburgh, in the Silent Partner)

Show me your Underwear and you will reveal your Character. (R. B.)

Said Mrs. Van, when Van got home, "Who were you talking to?"

(Head-line in Sacramento, Cal., Bee)

GOAT TAKES TELEPHONE EXCHANGE BY FORCE, HOLDS UP SERVICE (P. S. R.)

On a party-line you just gotta butt in, if you ever wanta get your number.

(Heber Springs Headlight)

CORRECTION

EDITOR *Headlight*—Please state in this week's issue that Mr. and Mrs. Matteson's wedding anniversary was on February 11th and Mr. Matteson was in his 24th year and Mrs. Matteson in her 22nd, and oblige.

MR. AND MRS. MATTESON.

Take a dose of Herbine when you are bilious, or your stomach is out of order. Sold by all Druggists. F. H.

Guess *that* retort will start something, alright-o.

(Wisdom, Mont., Big Hole Basin News)

Joe Coursey wishes to announce that he has withdrawn his checker challenge. He got into a game with the Briston schoolma'am and she skinned him. He then took on the Stephens family, one at a time, but could not win a game. (E. T. A.)

A Montana orgy.

(Adv. of wireless equipment, in New York Tribune)

There it is. The song. The speech. There's a sermon. Yes; you can go to church by wireless now—disregarding wind and weather.

'Salright, old top; but how'll that help me get rid of any plugged nickels?

(Burlington, Vt., Free Press)

The members of the Congregational Church have presented the pastor's family with a rag for the living-room and leather-covered chairs for the dining-room. (A. P. R.)

Mother, when do we eat?

(In Baltimore)

Leathers, Wood & Co., Cigar Makers.

The one I tried was worse than that.

(New York Tribune)

JIM JEFFRIES MAY BE AN EVANGELIST.

Well, why wouldn't he make a good expounder?

(Long Beach, N. Y., Life)

This space is reserved for Charles C. Clark, who is not allowed to advertise by the ethics of his profession. He wishes one and all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and if any one is having trouble at home he can call Mr. Clark at Vanderbilt, 6240. (H. F. L.)

Gee! Wouldn't he be mad if he saw *that?*

(Montesano, Wash., Vidette)

EDITOR *Vidette:* I wish to ask the good people of Montesano and vicinity not to feed, shelter, chain up, or in any way entertain my hunting dog. The dog is of pointer blood, dark-brown coat, all four feet tipped with white, white spot on breast, eyes brown. So, folks, please kick my dog out whenever he should happen to come to your place, and greatly oblige CHAS. DANIEL.

Reviving that old familiar po'm, "You better start kickin' my houn' around."

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(St. Paul, Minn., Dispatch)

Cornetist—Experienced, wants work. Address, 283, *Dispatch.*

Getting back to earth.

(St. Paul Dispatch)

Girl—To address circulars. 384 Wabasha street. Do not telephone.

Moral: Never answer anonymous letters.

(Collier's Weekly)

But when he reached the spot, he saw at once that the man was irrevocably dead. (D. G. S.)

Boy, get Sir Oliver Lodge on the 'phone, quick!

(Decatur, Ill., Herald)

Mrs. Robert Coughlin is spending the afternoon with her husband, Robert Coughlin, in De Pue.

Old Home week in Illinois.

(Milwaukee Sentinel)

How is your business getting along? Does it suffer from ingrowing taxes or outtrrfrsbstouy-u oniowo?gffeni iHgusialgettinnessing taxes or outgoing profits?

Yes; I should say all of that, and more.

(Adv. in Montesano, Calif., Vidette)

CAMISOLES
With Pyrex Glass
Tops and Nickel
Bases. (E. K. M.)

Chickens who live in glass houses should keep their eyes shut.

(Tuscola, Ill., Review)

Sunday morning, shortly after the man awoke, which was near the noon-hour, Doc sent to a near-by restaurant for eats for two. In the mean time, Doc missed his money. He started looking around for it, but failed to find it in its customary place. He accused the man and telephoned for Chief Getz. While awaiting the chief's arrival, he decided to put on some third-degree stuff to get the man to divulge where he had hidden the money. He grabbed him by the shirt, and in the scuffle tore it off him. With his big knife he threatened to disembowel the now badly frightened and pleading guest. Just at this juncture Doc felt some unusual pressure on his right shin. He glanced down and then remembered he had put his wad of money in his drawers and it had slipped way down below his knee.

The First National Merino Bank.

(Albuquerque, N.M., Journal)

Mrs. Lulu Kool and Roland Sauer Wed, Surprising Friends. (H. D. B.)

And they were once such warm friends, too.

(Johnstown, Pa., Tribune)

(Invitation issued by Somerset Country Club)

The committee desires to impress upon members that they are to exercise their own choice in that matter—to wear a costume and mask, or to appear without either. Come as you please, prepared to have a good time. (S. N. L.)

Gee! I'd be scared to death!

(Ottawa Evening Journal)

Spend Honeymoon Together in Manor.
Princess Mary and Viscount Lascelles Enjoy Seclusion.

Aw, what's the fun of a honeymoon if you have to take your bride along?

(San Francisco news in New York Tribune)

Breitwiser said the instrument he uses is so sensitive it will register the domestic kiss, the degree of frigidity in kisses one woman gives another she does not like, and so forth throughout all grades of osculation.

Breitwiser calls his instrument the kissograph. He gets a man and a woman who will kiss. He attaches wires to them; then they kiss. The machine acts automatically. He also said there is no difficulty in obtaining couples to carry on the experiments.

No; not in Calif.

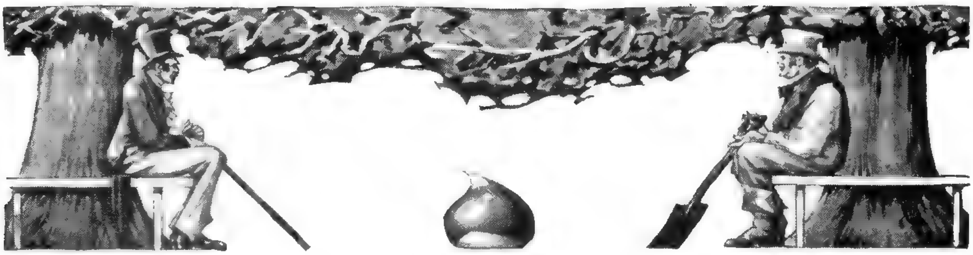
(New York Herald)

Meriden, Conn.—Panic followed the discovery that the sexton of the Central Congregational Church had locked the doors after it had become crowded with witnesses, hidden and forbidden, of a fashionable wedding last evening. The bride, Miss Clare Mae Booth, was a former public-school teacher and is very popular.

Hundreds of children, although not invited, pushed their way into the church. After the edifice had become packed, the sexton locked the doors. A lady fainted, and in attempting to remove her from the auditorium, it was found impossible to force a passage through the crowd that surged into the aisles.

When it was discovered the doors were locked, an attempt was made to find the sexton. This failed, and more women fainted. The smoldering panic now broke forth and a rush for the exit was made. The center-aisle door was forced open, and through this one opening hundreds of persons endeavored to get out. Women and children were trampled on, and some were injured painfully, but none seriously. A general call for the police and ambulance was rung, and upon their arrival the panic subsided.

Evidently the groom never *did* get in.



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

A SALESMAN from the States, having to travel to a town in the interior of Colombia, found himself at the mercy of a broken-down railway equipment which consisted of a locomotive whose rightful place was in a museum and a single passenger-coach. On purchasing his ticket, he learned that the train had first-, second- and third-class accommodations.

"How can you carry three classes of passengers in the same coach?" he inquired of the conductor, who was also the ticket-agent. The latter replied,

"Pretty soon you see."

And so he did when, after having accomplished but part of its run, the train came to a stop.

The conductor shouted some rapid orders in Spanish; the passengers rose and left the car. Some received buckets from a train-hand, and others were provided with axes. The bucket-squad made its way to a near-by pool and went back and forth with water for the locomotive's boiler, while the axmen chopped wood for the furnace.

"You see?" the conductor said to the first-class traveler. "First-class passengers don't work; second-class carry water; third-class chop wood."

A DENTIST had just moved into a place previously occupied by a baker when a friend called.

"Pardon me a moment," said the dentist, "while I dig off those enameled letters of 'Bake Shop' from the front window."

"Why not merely dig off the 'B' and let it go at that," suggested the friend.

WILLIAM H. CRANE, the actor, who spends much of his time in California, was recently telling a party of Hollywood moving-picture people some anecdotes connected with old-time favorites of the stage.

"Joe Jefferson," said he, "never had but one person with him who did not reverence the man as they did the name. This individual, one Bagley by name, was the property-man, and annoyed the great comedian with his unique familiarity. He had called Mr. Jefferson 'Joey' during his entire thirty years' service.

"Just previous to an opening in one of the big cities, Mr. Jefferson discharged Bagley for humiliating him before a number of friends. Bagley got drunk right away, and that night paid his way into the gallery to see Mr. Jefferson present 'Rip Van Winkle.' The angry wife has driven poor, destitute Rip from the cottage, when he turns and, with deep pathos in his voice, asks, 'Den haf I no interest in dis house?' It was deathly still, and the audience was half in tears when Bagley's cracked voice responded, 'Only eighty per cent., Joey—only eighty per cent.' "

"I TRUST that you were able to find something in this evening's service that will be of benefit to you?" inquired the zealous minister of his latest convert, a pretty young woman.

"Indeed I did!" she replied enthusiastically. "The woman who sat directly across from me was wearing an adorable little frock, and I'm going to have one made just like it."

LAURA liked to play hooky, but had difficulty in getting away with it, because every time she was absent from school the teacher sent a note to her mother. So one day she decided to try if she could not circumvent this embarrassing procedure. From a pay-station she got the teacher on the wire, and said, disguising her voice as well as she was able,

"I am calling up to tell you that Laura Lewis will not be at school to-day."

"Oh, all right," replied the teacher. "Who is this speaking?"

And poor Laura, to the unexpected question, answered,

"This is my mother."

IT WAS Sunday evening. The minister had arrived at "thirdly," and the hour was nine. Suddenly he noticed a man sleeping—and in the front pew.

"Will you please wake up that brother next to you," he said in a low tone to a man sitting beside the sleeper.

The latter replied loudly:

"Wake him yourself. You put him to sleep."

FLORA sat gazing fixedly at a lady who was calling on her mother.

"What is it?" asked the lady pleasantly. "Do you like my new hat?"

"No," replied Flora. "I'm waiting to see your other face. Mamma said you were two-faced, but I've only seen one."

MRS. SMITH and Mrs. Jones were discussing the affairs of a neighboring household and Mrs. Smith said,

"Mr. Robinson is greatly worried about the money market."

"And," added Mrs. Jones, "Mrs. Robinson is greatly worried about the market money."

GRACE is a young lady of five years and also of a very difficult disposition. The other day a visitor to her father's home found her weeping bitterly in a corner.

"Why, what are you crying about?" she asked.

" 'Cause all my brothers and sisters have a vacation and I don't have any. Boohoo!"

"Any why don't you have any vacation?"

" 'Cause I don't go to school yet."

A COLORED preacher set aside a Sunday for making a missionary appeal to his people and receiving contributions. The day came, and he preached a powerful sermon.

Before taking the offering he announced that he had a bit of bad news for his congregation. His chicken-house had been broken into the night before, and six of his best chickens were gone. Then he added:

"Now, I doan' want ter condemn nobody onjustly, but I hab my suspicions dat the niggah wat stole dem chickens is in dis here aujience dis mawnin'. I futhamo' hab a sneakin' suspicion dat when de collection-plate am passed, he will frow nuffin into de box. I shall keep an eye on ebery man. We must hab a big collection fer mishuns. De deacons will now pass de plate."

The deacons went down the aisle while the minister kept his eagle eye on the members of his flock. Every one put something into the boxes. The largest offering for missions the church ever gave was gathered in. Then the pastor announced:

"I doan' want none o' you niggahs to miss yo' dinnah or lose any sleep worryin' ovah who stole dem chickens. De facts is dat the whole story ain't so. It was only a pahable got up fer financial pupposes."

IT WAS late in the evening. Suddenly the door-bell rang and the doctor answered. Some one needed his services, he concluded.

"Miss Caroline Tomkins?" said the caller. Miss Tompkins was the doctor's cook.

"She has retired," said the doctor.

"This is for her"—handing the doctor a parcel from which peeped flowers and buds and leaves.

As he closed the door, the doctor said to himself,

"One of the cook's admirers has brought her a bouquet." He walked into the kitchen and placed the package in a dish of water.

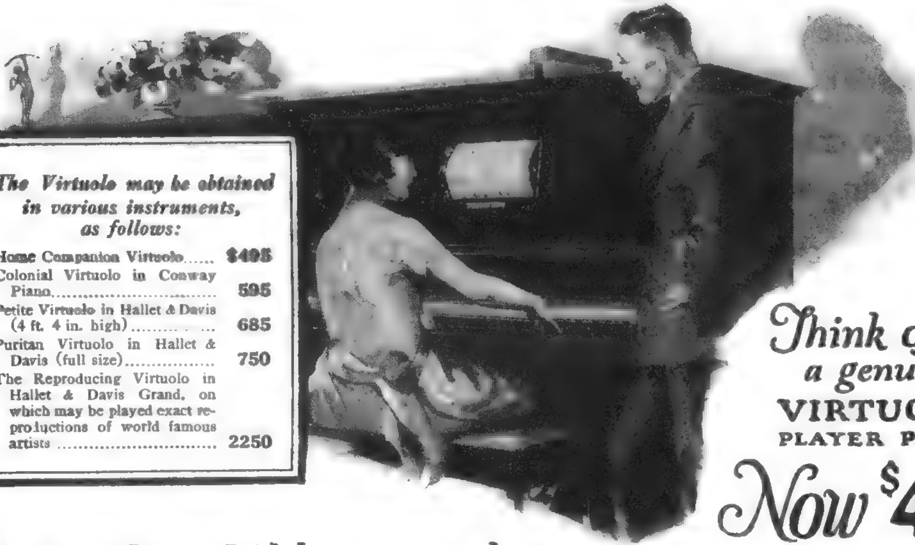
An indignant cook stood before him the next morning.

"I wish to give notice," she announced. "I'll not stay another day in a house where some varmint put my new hat in a basin of water."

POLICEMAN: Here! Here! Where did you get that rug from?

TRAMP: I didn't steal it. A lady up the street give it to me and told me to beat it.

Our New Plan *makes it amazingly easy to own this* Beautiful Player Piano



The Virtuolo may be obtained in various instruments, as follows:

Home Companion Virtuolo	$495
Colonial Virtuolo in Conway Piano	595
Petite Virtuolo in Hallet & Davis (4 ft. 4 in. high)	685
Puritan Virtuolo in Hallet & Davis (full size)	750
The Reproducing Virtuolo in Hallet & Davis Grand, on which may be played exact reproductions of world famous artists	2250

Think of it!
a genuine
VIRTUOLO
PLAYER PIANO
Now **$495**

Keep the children at home

Eminent Authorities Endorse This Method

THE atmosphere and environment of the American home is today forced to compete with the foreign attractions of jazz halls and light plays. These influences on our growing boys and girls deserve serious thought and are causing widespread attention.

A Plan with an Object

A solution of this artificial condition undermining American homes is now offered by a world famed musical institution. It has been endorsed by foremost educators.

The plan is to put music in every home and provide a counter-attraction to these dangerous outside influences. Music will help to keep the children at home and will entertain you too.

Wouldn't you like to own a beautiful new player piano, built by a company world-famous for its achievements in producing the highest type of instruments?

You can now do so easily and conveniently regardless of your circumstances. A remarkable plan has been carefully worked out and the new features in the pricing and financing will astonish you.

So Simple—So Unusual

This plan would be impossible if it were not backed by a company whose activities were world-wide and whose finances were unusually strong. The Hallet & Davis Piano Company back this movement and are in a position to carry it out because they possess these essentials.

The coupon below will give you this confidential information by return mail. It marks a new departure which puts this wonderful instrument into homes of moderate means, where formerly they were obtainable only by the financially prominent.

This plan meets the *individual requirements* of every family, in every status and condition.

All parents should get the facts without fail. They are confidential. They will surprise you. Do it now to obtain them quickly. Mail the coupon at once.

THE VIRTUOLO
PLAYER PIANO
Made by
HALLET & DAVIS
Established 1839

CONFIDENTIAL
INFORMATION COUPON

HALLET & DAVIS PIANO CO.,
146 Boylston St., Boston, Mass.

Send me confidential prices and terms of Virtuolo.

Name...
Address...
City........................ *State*......................

The Land of Unborn Babies

IN Maeterlinck's play—
"The Blue Bird," you see the exquisite Land—all misty blue —where countless babies are waiting their time to be born.

As each one's hour comes, Father Time swings wide the big gate. Out flies the stork with a tiny bundle addressed to Earth.

The baby cries lustily at leaving its nest of soft, fleecy clouds—not knowing what kind of an earthly "nest" it will be dropped into.

Every baby cannot be born into a luxurious home—cannot find awaiting it a dainty, hygienic nursery, rivalling in beauty the misty cloud-land.

But it is every child's rightful heritage to be born into a clean, healthful home where the Blue Bird of Happiness dwells.

As each child is so born—
the community, the nation, and the home are richer. For just as the safety of a building depends upon its foundation of rock or concrete so does the safety of the race depend upon its foundation—the baby.

And just as there is no use in repairing a building above, if its foundation be *weak,* there is no use in hoping to build a strong civilization except through healthy, happy babies.

Thousands of babies—
die needlessly every year. Thousands of rickety little feet falter along Life's Highway. Thousands of imperfect baby-eyes strain to get a clear vision of the wonders that surround them. Thousands of defective ears cannot hear even a mother's lullaby.

And thousands of physically unfit men and women occupy back seats in life, are counted failures—all because of the thousands

The Land of Unborn Babies

and thousands of babies who have been denied the birthright of a sanitary and protective home.

So that wherever one looks—the need for better homes is apparent. And wherever one listens can be heard the call for such homes from the Land of Unborn Babies.

The call is being heard—

by the schools and colleges that are establishing classes in home-making and motherhood; by public nurses and other noble women who are visiting the homes of those who need help and instruction; by the hospitals that are holding Baby Clinics.

By towns and cities that are holding Baby Weeks and health exhibits; by magazines and newspapers that are publishing articles on pre-natal care.

By Congress that has passed the Mothers and Babies Act, under which health boards in every State will be called upon to give information to expectant mothers.

All this is merely a beginning—

The ground has hardly been broken for the Nation's only safe foundation—healthy babies—each of whom must have its rightful heritage—An Even Chance—a healthy body.

The call will not be *answered* until every mother, every father and every community helps to make better homes in which to welcome visitors from the Land of Unborn Babies.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company has been working years for improvement in home conditions and surroundings and rejoices in having helped thereby to reduce materially the death rate of babies and of mothers in childbirth. During this period the death rate from infectious diseases of children has been reduced 37%. The total death rate has been reduced 31.9%.

The work of this Company has been of such vital importance to its policyholders and the public, that it is publishing the results with the hope of showing to everyone, everywhere, that there is nothing more important than protecting the people of our land from preventable diseases and unnecessary death.

In 1921 the Metropolitan distributed 25,000,000 booklets dealing with the most important phases of health and disease. It will be glad to furnish on request, booklets telling the mother how to prepare for the baby; how to keep the home sanitary; how to protect her children against contagious diseases—how to make the family healthier and happier.

HALEY FISKE, *President*

THE LIGHT THAT NEVER FAILS

Published by

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY—NEW YORK

"The Best Hunch I Ever Had!"

"I was feeling pretty blue. Pay-day had come around again and the raise I'd hoped for wasn't there. It began to look as though I was to spend the rest of my life checking orders at a small salary!

"I picked up a magazine. It fell open at a familiar advertisement, and a coupon stared me in the face. Month after month I'd been seeing that coupon, but never until that moment had I thought of it as meaning anything to me. But this time I read the advertisement twice—yes, every word. *And this time I tore out the coupon!*

"That was the turn in the road for me. The Schools at Scranton suggested a course that would give me a real understanding of our business and they worked with me every hour I had to spare.

"In six months I was in charge of my division. In a year my salary had been doubled! And I've been advancing ever since. Today I was appointed manager of our Western office at $5,000 a year. Tearing out that coupon three years ago was the best hunch I ever had."

You, too, can have the position you want in the work you like best. No matter what your age, your occupation, your education or your means—*you can do it.*

All we ask is the chance to prove it. Just mark and mail this coupon. It takes but a moment, but it's the most important thing you can do today. Do it right now!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2683, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full information about the subject *before* which I have marked an X in the list below:

BUSINESS TRAINING DEPARTMENT

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Personnel Organization
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Business Law
☐ Banking and Banking Law
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)
☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Business Spanish ☐ French
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Better Letters
☐ Foreign Trade
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Business English
☐ Civil Service
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Common School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT

☐ Electrical Engineering
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Mechanical Engineer
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice
☐ Railroad Positions
☐ Gas Engine Operating
☐ Civil Engineer
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Mine Foreman or Engineer
☐ Steam Engineering
☐ Radio ☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Architect
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Plumbing and Heating
☐ Chemistry
☐ Pharmacy
☐ Automobile Work
☐ Navigation
☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Mathematics

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Address..

City.................................... State..........................

Occupation..

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Ingersoll

For Summer Time
And All the Time

All Ingersoll watches are good timekeepers. Sturdy, reasonable, reliable, good looking, they carry a sound guarantee.

You need not worry about loss, theft nor breakage. The cost of a new Ingersoll is so small, comparatively. Twelve models, including Radiolites. See dealers' displays.

INGERSOLL WATCH CO., Inc.
New York San Francisco
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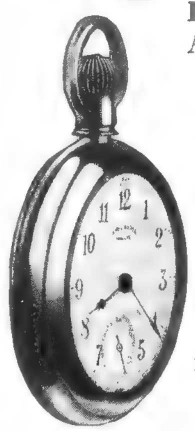

Yankee
$1.50

STANDARD UNDERWOODS

5-Year Guarantee

$3.00 DOWN

Yes, this genuine Standard Visible Writing Underwood, newly rebuilt, at much less than factory prices, yours for $3.00 down and then easy monthly payments.

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Try it for 10 days at our risk. Money back guarantee. Send now for free book. Big bargain offer.

Standard Keyboard

Typewriter Emporium, C-222 Shipman Bldg.
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—Soothed—
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Do You Want an income Like These?

	E.A.Sweet	C.A.Rowe	W.J.McCrary
July	$ 925.00	$ 919.00	$ 751.00
Aug.	$ 891.00	$ 936.00	$ 865.00
Sept.	$ 667.00	$ 1228.00	$ 527.00
Oct.	$ 1200.00	$ 993.00	$ 703.00

ARE you willing to step into a position to-day, without training, without any investment, where you are absolutely *your own boss*, where you can set your *own hours*—work when and where you please—and have an income of $50.00 to $200.00 a week? Then send me your name and I will tell you how to get started.

I want 500 men and women to take orders for Comer Raincoats right in their own communities. I will make *you* the same offer I made Sweet, Rowe and McCrary. Rowe was a baker and started by using only his spare time, yet he makes around $800.00 a month. McCrary was making $2.00 a day and now his earnings are close to $9,000 a year. No matter where you live, or what you do, you can increase your income if you will devote one or two hours each day to this proposition. *No experience is necessary.* I will furnish a complete selling outfit, will tell you what to say and how to make the money. I will see that you get your profit the *same day* you earn it, without waiting, without delays.

Read These Earnings Records

Newton made $614.68 in October, Robinson made $703.60, Wilson made $445.11. Hamilton made $721.00 in September. Conners made $613.00. Ed Wimberly makes from $250.00 to $350.00 a month in his spare time only. Maggie McCoy wrote "my earnings will be over $3,000 this year." George Garon made a clear profit of $40.00 in his first day's work. H. G. Greenwood cleaned up $354.00 in his second month as a Comer representative. R. W. Krieger made $20.00 net profit in one-half hour. A. B. Spencer made $625.00 in one month. I now offer *you* this *same* opportunity.

No Investment Required

It is not necessary for you to invest any money. I will provide you with all the materials and instructions that you will need. In addition to the big regular profits, I offer hundreds of dollars each month in bonuses, so that you have unlimited opportunities to make big profits just as soon as you get my offer.

Special Opportunity for Women

We have a special proposition through which any woman can add $25.00 a week or more to her income by using one or two hours a day spare time.

only an hour or so a day to this same proposition in your territory, write at once to the Comer Manufacturing Company, Dayton, Ohio. They will send you without any preliminary correspondence or red tape a complete selling outfit, with full instructions, samples, style-book, order book and everything you need to get started. Sign and mail the coupon now and in less than a week you can be making more money than you ever believed possible.

C. E. COMER

The Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. K-71, Dayton, Ohio

send me, without any expense or obligation to me, complete outfit and instructions.

Name...

Address..

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Everybody's Business

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Big Money and Fast Sales. Every owner buys Gold Initials for his auto. You charge $1.50; make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 41, East Orange, N. J.

Make $25 to $50 Week representing Clows' Famous Philadelphia Hosiery, direct from mill—for men, women, children. Every pair guaranteed. Prices that win. Free book "How to Start" tells the story. George Clows Co., Desk 16, Philadelphia, Pa.

All men, women, boys and girls, over 17 years, willing to accept Government Positions, $135. Write Mr. Ozment, 296 St. Louis, immediately.

Agents, $60 to $200 a week, free samples. Gold Sign Letters for Store and Office Windows. Any one can do it. Big demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 431 Y, No. Clark St., Chicago.

Large manufacturer wants agents; sell advertised brand men's shirts direct to wearer. No capital or experience required. Free samples. Madison Mills, 505 Broadway, New York.

Better Positions, More Earnings, Constant Demand Everywhere. Trade commissioners; purchasing agents; investigators; traffic managers; inspectors—canneries; dairy products; factories; fisheries; food; immigration; weights measures. Industrial knowledge prospectus free, without obligation. International Technological Institute, Dept. F, Box 595, Adelaide, Toronto, Canada.

Greatest Sensation! Eleven-Piece Soap and Toilet Set, selling like blazes for $1.75 with $1.00 Dressmaker's Sheers FREE, to each customer. Other Unique Plans. E. M. Davis Co., Dept. 116, Chicago.

Guaranteed Hosiery, lowest prices, manufacturer's complete line direct to wearer. Samples without charge. We deliver. Part time acceptable. Joseph Bros., 341-P Broadway, New York City.

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Get into Business for Yourself! Establish and operate "New System Specialty Candy Factory" in your community. We furnish everything. Money-making opportunity unlimited. Either men or women. Big Candy Booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 94, East Orange, N. J.

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For Sale Guns and Pistols. Antique Firearms, Matchlocks, Flintlocks, Percussion and Cartridge. Civil War Firearms. Guns 30 inches to 100 inches long. Pistols 4 inches to 23 inches long. List free. Wanted rare firearms, also American-made muzzle-loading flintlock rifles. Thos. Spencer, Lebanon, Ohio.

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5,000 Photoplay ideas needed. Working girl paid $10,000 for ideas she thought worthless. Yours may be worth more. Experience unnecessary. Details free. Producers League, 390, St. Louis.

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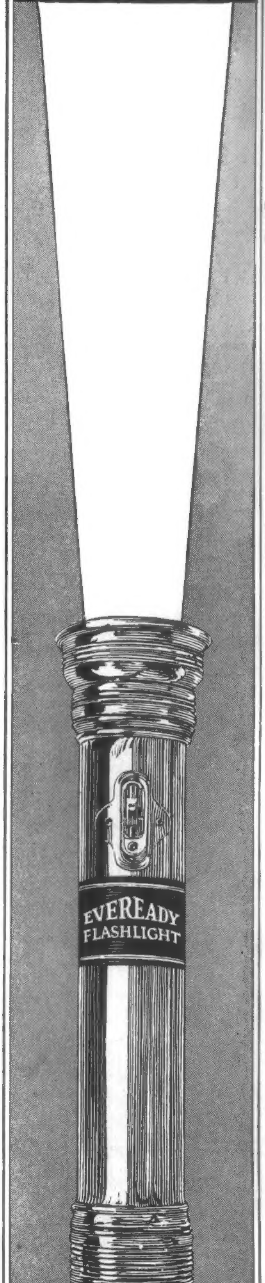
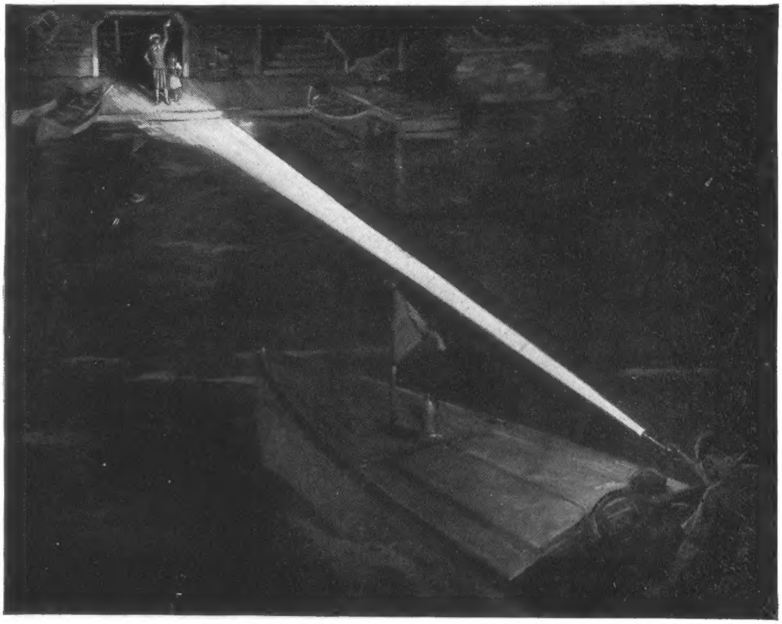
COL. PRESTON LEWIS GRAY, *President*, Box 21, Mebane, N. C.

Eveready Spotlight
with the
300-ft. Range



There's an Eveready Flashlight complete for every purpose from $1.35 to $4



AN EVEREADY FLASHLIGHT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN A LIFE PRESERVER

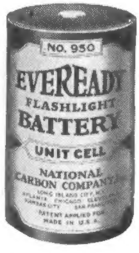
Eveready Spotlight — a vacation necessity

Vacation time again! And this Eveready Spotlight, ***with its 300-ft. shaft of electric brilliance,*** adds more enjoyment to the evenings than anything else in the kit! A handy necessity for motor boating, canoeing, or rowing; going over to the dance; flashing signals; strolling down the road; emergency use in your automobile; lighting the way everywhere.

MONEY-BACK OFFER

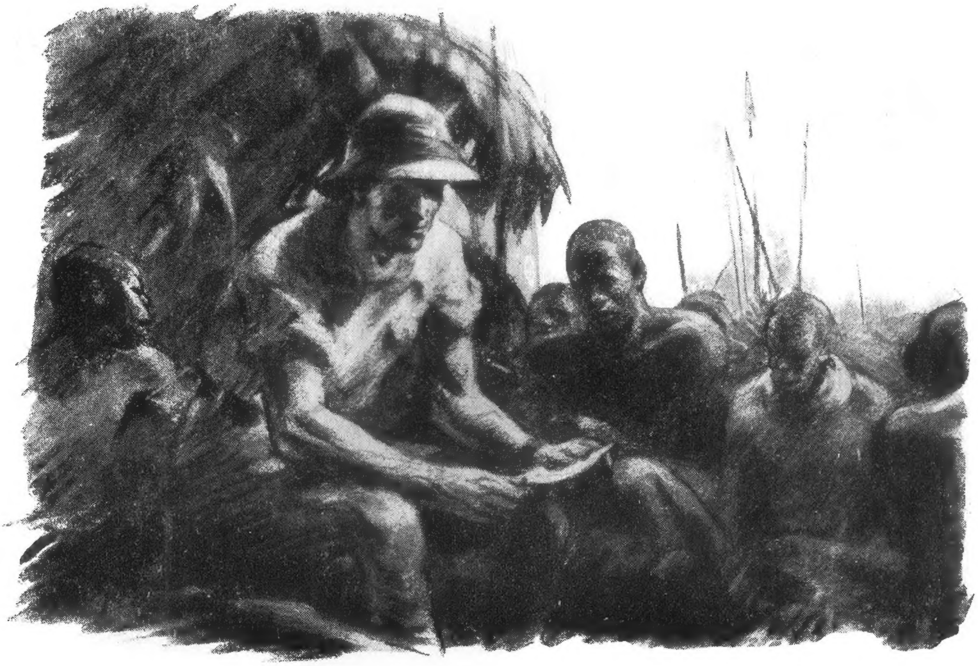
Try out this wonderful spotlight without risk. Buy one of any Eveready dealer for $3.75. Use it over night, flashing it on objects near and far. If you are not glad to keep it, return it the next day, and the dealer will refund your money. But you will keep it, and you would not be without an Eveready Spotlight for many times its small cost.

For sale everywhere at electrical, hardware, sporting goods, drug, and auto accessory shops; garages; general stores.



Eveready Flashlight Batteries give brighter light; last longer; fit and improve all makes of flashlights

EVEREADY
FLASHLIGHTS
& BATTERIES



The Man Who Never Hurried !

That was the name they gave to the man whom white people knew so little and black people so much; who said to the woman who loved him, "Dreams that come true are no longer dreams, only drab reality;" the man with the silver hair and the face of a boy who searched endlessly for the thing he hoped to find, and yet when he found it was not satisfied.

"The Gray Charteris" is the title of this new novel by Robert Simpson and it will start in *Adventure* magazine in August. Don't miss this fascinating story about the uncanny influence over people held by the gray silent man for whom you will feel both pity and envy.

Besides there are stories by —

Talbot Mundy
Harold Lamb
Bill Adams
Norman Springer
Hugh Pendexter
Captain Dingle

Don't miss them!

Adventure

THRICE A MONTH
ON EVERY NEWS-STAND